THE PUBLIC LIFE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

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THE PUBLIC LIFE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

AN INTERPRETATION

BY

THE MOST REV. ALBAN GOODIER, S.J.

ARCHBISHOP OF HIERAPOLIS

VOLUME II

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THE PUBLIC LIFE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

CHAPTER XX

64. The First Prophecy of the Passion

‘ From that time
Jesus began to shew to his disciples
That the Son of Man
Must go to Jerusalem
And suffer many things
And be rejected
By the ancients and chief priests and scribes
And be put to death
And after three days rise again
And he spoke the word openly.’

The day on which Simon Peter made his great confession was a landmark and a day of change in many ways. Jesus now no longer hung about the outlying semi-pagan districts ; He turned His steps once more towards Galilee. From Cæsarea Philippi to the north of the lake, down the upper Jordan valley, would be a short day’s journey ; between the hills on either side the road was even. He took that road ; as He went along He began to speak to the Twelve of other things which were indeed passing strange. He had come to found a Kingdom, and at last the Kingdom had been founded ; that day the foundation-stone had been definitely laid. All during the preceding months He had laboured hard to teach them independence of the Pharisees and Scribes. He had told them expressly not to fear them ; to their faces He had defied those men ; when they had wished to argue with Him He had turned His back upon them. He had bade His own to beware, not of the men themselves, but of their ‘ leaven ’ ; of the doctrine they taught and their subtle devices.

Now on a sudden all was changed. He no longer sought to avoid them; He would go into the very jaws of death. He no longer spoke of His power and authority; He spoke as one who was already doomed. He had just crowned His teaching by the promise that the gates of hell should not prevail against His Church; yet this was immediately followed by emphatic predictions, that He must go into the centre of danger, that there He must suffer, must be rejected, must die. And not only must the people reject Him; that, more or less, the Twelve could understand. Already many had begun to desert Him, many more had never followed Him at all. The talk they had heard in the bazaar had let them see that the crowds were not to be trusted. But the rejection, so He told them, would be far more serious than that. He would be rejected by the ancients, by the chief priests, by the Scribes, by every authority which they held sacred, and all but infallible, and representative of God Himself. In the end, so they had always dreamed, He would win them to His side; by His miracles, by His words, by the evidence of Himself, He would convince these leaders as He had convinced them. The Old Law would at last recognize its Messias; the priests of the Temple would see in Him their elder Brother, the prophets would be proved to have been fulfilled in Him. Ancients, priests, and Scribes would be convinced, and Jerusalem the Golden would own its lawful King.

So they had dreamt, and in the strength of that dream the human side of their minds had clung to Him. What then could He mean by this strange and new language that He spoke? He gave no explanation; He just stated the fact; again and again, when they were alone together, He came back upon it. At first it would seem that again He was speaking to them in parables, and later would explain what He meant. Then, since no word of explanation came, they would say that this was a timely warning of opposition that would last yet longer. Lastly, since He continued to repeat it, they were convinced that He was only too depressed; that He was feeling too keenly His recent ill-success, the desertion of the people, the enmity of the Scribes and Pharisees, the weakening of themselves, the Twelve, His own inability to do anything that would appeal. He was too sad; He was losing heart; He was looking into the future with hopeless eyes; perhaps He was saying these things that He might induce them to show Him sympathy and encouragement. For surely what He said could never positively come true; such a doom could never befall the Son of the living God.

Once more Simon, now Peter, spoke up for the rest. He was now the Rock; he must show that he was equal to the task imposed upon him. Along that country lane, in His company, with the Eleven all around him, and not a single enemy in sight, Peter could be very brave. Nay more, he could show what a worthy vicar he would be. If the Master went down, he would be there to lift Him up. The Kingdom had been established. They must not now look back. Such a debacle as Jesus foreshadowed must not be tolerated for a moment. Besides, for Him to speak like this would have a bad effect upon the rest. The last few months had been hard enough; ever since their successful expeditions, when Jesus had sent them to preach before the Pasch, they had had a trying time. They had shown anxiety of late at the attitude of the Pharisees and Scribes; if this kind of future were all their Master could show them, they, too, might lose heart. He must interfere; He must remonstrate. He was now the Rock; he stood responsible for the loyalty of the rest. The gates of hell were not to prevail against him; much less must they be permitted to prevail against his Master. Perhaps this was a first test for him; if so, like a man he must play his part.

So it came about that on one of these occasions, when Jesus again came back on this depressing picture, Simon Peter would endure it no longer. He took Jesus aside; he meant to speak strongly, therefore he did not wish to be overheard. Affectionately enough he scolded his Master; he rebuked Him, he pointed out to Him what a mistake was this which He was making:

'And Peter taking him
Began to rebuke him saying
Lord
Be it far from thee
This shall not be unto thee.'

Jesus looked at Peter. At another time, in another place, He might have taken his remonstrance gently, at least with greater condescension; by the Jordan, on the lake, in the synagogue at Capharnaum, He had always given Peter

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encouragement. But now it was very different ; the Peter that now spoke was another man from him who said :

‘ Depart from me
For I am a sinful man
O Lord ’,

or again :

‘ Lord, if it be thou
Bid me come to thee upon the waters ’ ;

or who had later cried :

‘ Lord
To whom shall we go?
Thou hast the words of eternal life.’

For in this last assumptive manner there was that which might one day prove Peter’s downfall. Besides there were others to be considered. The Eleven were behind, looking on. They knew what Peter was doing ; if they could not hear his words they could guess from his behaviour, for Peter was always spontaneous. Though Peter was the chosen head, yet even Peter had his place and his duty, and both he and the others must be taught it.

Jesus turned round and stood still. He faced the Eleven coming towards Him, He turned His back on Peter. Then severely, yet not offensively, for Peter clung to Him all the same, He spoke strong words.

‘ Who turning about
And seeing his disciples
Threatened Peter saying
Go behind me, Satan
Thou art a scandal to me
Because thou savourest not
The things that are of God
But the things that are of men.’

Such was Peter’s first lesson as Prince of the Apostles. Not always success as men see it is the truest triumph. There is something far more true than success, and truth alone in the end prevails.

But the lesson begun was not to stop there. Not only to the Twelve had He now begun to teach this new doctrine of suffering, and rejection, and death ; He would show that to others also His attitude had changed. And yet in reality it had not changed ; He who from the beginning had blessed the poor, and the meek, and those who suffered for the sake of justice, was consistent with Himself. Only from henceforward He would emphasize those things which before had been less noticed. He would insist that suffering of some kind, were it only that of ordinary life, was a condition of His service ; that the first step in the following of Him was to be along the way of the Cross.

By this time they had traversed the border and had come into the north-eastern parts of Galilee, not far away from Capharnaum. Very soon the people of those parts were out on the road to meet Him ; not the enthusiastic crowds He had spoken to before, for most of these had scattered to their homes, in Judæa and Perœa, in Tyre and Syria, but local people who were still His friends, and were glad to welcome Him back into their midst. These gathered round Him and He let them come. He called them to Him as if He had on His return something in particular to say to them. He spoke to them in His old manner, confidently, kindly ; yet was He also as one addressing those who had already learnt much. He drew them on from what they had been taught before ; He led them to see that His coming was not all to be marked by miracles and triumphs. He reminded them of the Sermon He had preached up there on the hill that rose behind them ; how He had begun by pouring blessing on the mournful, and those who endured. That lesson He would now drive further home. It was the beginning and end of His teaching, both by word and by example, so far as this life was concerned.

'And calling the multitudes together, with his disciples, he said to all : If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel shall save it. For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul ? And be cast away or suffer the loss of himself ? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? For he that shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. For then will he render to every man according to his works. And he said to them : Amen I say to you, I tell you of a truth that there are some of them that stand here who shall not see death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom, and the kingdom of God coming in power.'

Indeed this was a new aspect of the Man who stood before that crowd. They were still ' in admiration at His doctrine ' ; that His speech was still with power none could deny. His absence from Galilee had not then been one of weakness ; He returned mightier than ever. He still spoke as one having authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees ; nay, His authority went further than it had ever gone before, ending on a note that thundered through heaven and earth. The disciples heard it and were awed as well as the rest ; they were lost in the infinite vision, so far-reaching, and yet at the same time so intimate. While He looked into eternity He looked no less into the heart of every individual man. Again He had used the familiar word of welcome : ' Come ' ; but this time He had added conditions and consequences of the coming. Of all this, hitherto, they had not thought much. By the Jordan they had gone after Him, merely following the light ; at Bethsaida, in Capharnaum, when He called, they had just stood up and left all, glad at heart to make the great adventure. When He had formed them into the group of Twelve, and had taken them with Him wherever He had gone, joyfully they had gone with Him, joyfully stayed beside Him, hoping, knowing that at every step the Kingdom was coming nearer and their dream of dreams was about to be fulfilled.

But this was a new lesson. To follow Him was not to go from town to town, making a great stir ; it was to be like Him in the trivial things of every day, in His poverty of spirit, His meekness, His mourning, His hunger after all that was right, His forgiving mercy, His cleanness of heart, His peacefulness of mind, His patient endurance of whatever men might say about Him, whatever men might do to Him. Of victory, of success, even of display He seemed to reckon nothing ; nay more, He seemed to repudiate it all. Aim at it, and it will fly away ; cast to the winds all thought of it, and it will come of its own accord. Only follow Him, be like Him, reproduce Him, lose life itself and all that is in it when His imitation shall demand it, and somehow the rest will come. Man will have done with himself the best that can be done ; the Kingdom of itself will grow.

He had lifted them up on another plane. In the early days, in the days of His temptations, we have seen how

‘ The devil took him up
And shewed him all the kingdoms of the world
In a moment of time
And the glory of them ’,

and had said to Him :

‘ To thee will I give all this power
And all the glory of them
For to me they are delivered
And to whom I will I give them
If therefore thou falling down
Wilt adore before me
All shall be thine.’

That temptation was no passing thing. It was real, it was persistent, it attacked the soul of every man who was zealous for the spread of the Kingdom, it would continue to the end of time. At that very moment His followers were affected by it. Because of it they would make Him their King ; not least His Twelve dreamed and dreamed again that for the conquest of the world, the gaining of it for the Kingdom, any price would be worth while.

‘ In a moment of time
The glory of them
All shall be thine.’

Who would not give all He possessed for a conquest so glorious !

Jesus would now set Himself to correct that impression. More than all the world to Him was the single soul of any single man ; more than a kingdom that reached across the globe, and held the nations in thrall, was a kingdom in a single heart. As it was to Him, so would He have it be to every man. The Kingdom of God was within Him, it was not of this world ; it was in the hearts of other men, not in the things that they possessed. Let a man therefore keep that safe, and all would be well ; let him save a single soul, and another, and another, one by one ; in that alone would come the conquest.

And then He took another side ; He faced and countered another temptation that pursued and would pursue His own. For thus they would reason. To seek to spread the Kingdom, to win the favour and allegiance of men to Jesus Christ, to conquer the power and glory of the earth, entailed a great risk, demanded great prudence. For this men must needs be humoured ; they must not be offended ; the unpleasant things must be glossed over. Jesus of Nazareth might at times be a scandal to Pharisees and Scribes. His claim, too, openly declared, might shock the people of Nazareth ; to the men of Capharnaum His promises might appear too extravagant. His overlordship of the Sabbath and the Temple might offend the citizens of Jerusalem ; His powers, too strongly maintained, might arouse opposition, above all His power of forgiving sins. On this account some of His own would be tempted to half-measures. They would suffer human prudence to prevail ; they would adapt Jesus Christ and His doctrine to the standards of this earth ; they would be ashamed to proclaim Him as He was. It was not a new temptation ; it was but another phase of that which we have just seen. To prefer the external kingdom to the kingdom within a human soul, to sacrifice a soul for the kingdom, would in the end lead to this ; that for the sake of the Kingdom the King Himself would be sacrificed.

Once for all, then, He would denounce and crush this evil, the greatest save one that could creep into His Church, and of the others He had already given warning. This was the evil that would try her most, and would injure her most, both from within and from without, through all the ages that were to come, in high places as well as in corners of the Kingdom. A few days before He had founded His Church on Peter ; Peter had responded by saying that which savoured not

'The things that are of God
But the things that are of men.'

Even in Peter then the danger was imminent. Therefore, now for the first time, the Son of Man reveals Himself in all His dignity and might. The kingdom of the earth ! Let the kingdoms of the earth hear Him who now speaks and tremble.

'He that shall be ashamed of me
And of my words
In this adulterous and sinful generation
Of him the Son of Man will also be ashamed
When he shall come in the glory of his Father
With the holy angels.'

It was a tremendous announcement; for those who were versed in the prophets it was also a solemn declaration. Now definitely, at this beginning of His downfall, Jesus declared what He meant by His self-chosen title of the Son of Man. Daniel had foreseen it; Jesus took to Himself the prophet's words.

'I beheld therefore in the vision of the night
And lo one like the son of man
Came with the clouds of heaven
And he came even to the Ancient of days
And they presented him before him
And he gave him power and glory
And a kingdom
And all peoples and tribes and tongues
Shall serve him
His power is an everlasting power
That shall not be taken away
And his kingdom that shall not be destroyed.'
Daniel vii, 13, 14.

As the storm rises against Him, so much the more from henceforward does Jesus assert His supremacy. As here He had foretold His doom, and then in the same breath foretold His victory, so when the end did come, in the same words but more emphatic, He announced the coming of His Kingdom. In all and among all He was always the Master; this feature of His life must never be forgotten during the troubled times which are now to follow. Nowhere more than on Calvary does He show that He is the Lord.

65. The Transfiguration

Jesus had abruptly returned into Galilee, over the border near to Capharnaum, but excepting this one address to the people on the need of carrying the Cross, we have no record that He said or did anything more. He had come back for another purpose. He knew that for the remainder of His days He would meet almost entirely with opposition. During these last months He had waited till He was able to build His house upon a rock, now He was ready to face whatever wind or storm might come. He had returned to face them. But though His Twelve were devoted to Him, though they had at last acknowledged Him to be what He was, though they had elected to stand by Him, no matter what the future might bring, still He knew they were only human, and therefore timid, and easily awed by the sight of the enemy ranged against Him. They would need all the courage His prayers could win for them; their faith would need to be confirmed; the leaders in particular must be given that which would support them, in view of the day of the great eclipse.

For a week or more it would seem He remained in seclusion, retired among the hills behind Capharnaum; it was yet another week of prayer and preparation with His own. At length on the eighth day He set out again. He made southward, skirting the valley of Genesareth, and in the afternoon came to the foot of Mount Thabor. In the village lying at its base, where it juts into the Vale of Esdraelon, He left the main body of His companions. Peter, James, and John alone He called to climb the mountain with Him; the three whom He had before selected to witness what He did that day when He raised the daughter of Jairus.

Thabor is a singular mountain, so singular that were it not for its huge size one might almost judge it to be artificial. It is conical in shape, unlike any other mountain in the whole of Palestine, rising alone and apart in the north-east angle of the Vale of Esdraelon. For miles around it can be seen and distinguished from all other elevations; from its summit one gains the most comprehensive view of all the northern part of the country. Away at the western end of the valley are seen Carmel and the sea; along the southern range the eye wanders, passing Naim and Endor, till it reaches the valley of the Jordan. Again on the north stretches the row of mountains behind which lie Nazareth and Cana, till, to the further north-east, between a gap among the hills, one catches a glimpse of the northern corner of the Lake of Galilee, with the evergreen sward beyond where took place the feeding of the five thousand. If Jesus had wished to choose a spot whose site should help in the demonstration of His glory, a spot more suitable could scarcely have been chosen; he who held Thabor, a strategist might have said, held all the country round. So the crusaders thought when they fortified its summit with walls whose foundations still stand; so thought the Saracens, when at its foot they finally broke the Christian armies, and massacred the occupants of Thabor to a man.

Up this mountain Jesus climbed along with His three companions. Evidently this was nothing strange to them.

They had grown accustomed to these retirements ; of late in particular they had become frequent, as if, after the disappointments of His months of activity, He were preferring to revert to His original method of prayer. They came up the hill, expecting nothing strange ; indeed when they reached the summit they were very weary. Here, as was His custom, Jesus went aside to pray ; the three left together did likewise, with goodwill enough, but their eyes and their limbs were heavy. In a very short time they were lost in slumber, closely akin to sleep.

But very soon they were awakened. They had come up in the evening ; by now it was deep night ; yet they found themselves surrounded with light, brighter than the light of day. The light came from the spot where Jesus had knelt down, and in spite of themselves their eyes were drawn towards it. There in front of them, standing and looking towards them, was a figure that filled them with fear. Was it Jesus ? If so, then He was completely changed ; so changed that at first they could not recognize Him. His very countenance was no longer the same. Could it be called human ? At all events there were no human words with which it could be described. It shone so brightly that as they looked at it their eyes were dazzled ; a light seemed to shine through it from within, brilliant and blinding as the very sun itself. His clothing, too, was shining ; His rough workman's garment was transformed, Solomon in all his glory was never clothed as He. One might call its colour white, yet was it whiter than white, whiter than dazzling snow, whiter than any man could make white, brighter than the whitest light.

'And whilst he prayed
He was transfigured before them
And the shape of his countenance was altered
And his face did shine as the sun
And his garments became white and glittering
And exceeding white as snow
So as no fuller on earth can make white.'

For awhile the three men were spell-bound. They forgot themselves, they forgot their surroundings ; they were lost, paralysed, carried utterly beyond themselves, dead yet alive, in the fascination of the vision before them. It was glory, it was triumph ; it was magnificence beyond imagination; it was an ecstatic moment, when eye, and mind, and heart, and soul, each beheld with its own peculiar power of vision, and was caught, and enthralled, and enraptured, carried out of life, yet thereby made to feel in the very essence of their being the utter joy of living. It was heaven; it was freedom from all bondage; it was the light which was the life of men, the light shining in the darkness, the light enlightening every man that cometh into the world. Jesus Christ, the Light, the Life, the Son of the living God! Their hearts were fit to burst with the fulness of it all, the fulness of all grace, of all truth.

Presently they became aware that they were not alone; besides themselves were other spectators of the vision. As their eyes grew more accustomed to the dazzling brightness, or as they turned away for relief, they discerned two men—or were they men? They seemed too full of light, too majestic!—standing on His either side, and holding intercourse with Him. Yes, they must be men, for they were speaking with Him. They were holding serious discussion, as three men might who had gone apart to make some plan for the future. What were they discussing? That, too, they soon discovered. One spoke of the first son of Eve, Abel, slain by his brother, Cain; of Isaac offered in sacrifice by his father, Abraham, of the blood of the lamb that was spread upon the door-posts in Egypt, and saved the Hebrews from the angel of death; of the lamb that was killed and eaten to commemorate the great delivery; of the cross uplifted in the desert to save the people from their doom; of the sacrifices, of the scapegoat, of all those signs that pointed to Him who was to come, and therefore

'Of his decease
That he should accomplish in Jerusalem.'

Then spoke the second figure. He dwelt on the message of the prophets, their words, their warnings, and their doom; on the suffering that awaited everyone who spoke the word of God to this stubborn and stiff-necked people; on the picture of the Messias that had grown in ever darker colours as the ages had advanced; on the prophecy contained in the story of Israel itself, perishing and again its dead bones given life. Long was his tale; prophecy followed prophecy, but the sign foreshadowed was clear to demonstration. The prophet spoke, too,

‘ Of his decease
That he should accomplish in Jerusalem.’

In a dazed state the three men listened, overcome by what they saw, hearing the words that were said, paying little heed to their significance; only long afterwards, when at last the whole drama was completed, did it all come back upon them. In the present they could not think; only by degrees, from the words that were said, from an interior recognition, they came to perceive who were these two that spoke with Jesus. They were Moses and Elias; Moses the Giver of the Law, Elias the founder of the school of the prophets.

For some time these three figures standing in the brightness held their conversation. At length there came an end; the two that had come began to fade away into the surrounding mist of light. Then speech returned to Peter. He was still beside himself; being more spontaneous, more enthusiastic, he was more beside himself than the others. What he said he scarcely knew, nor did he greatly care; but his bursting heart must say something, whatever words came first to his mind. And what words could more express his heart at that moment than words of joy in prayer? Oh! the delights of such prayer as this! Oh! the satisfaction of living for ever thus alone with the Lord! This was indeed to live; this was the light, the life; and since it was that, why then let it go on for ever! Let the weary world go by, the weary, disappointing world! Here on this mountain, with him, Peter, as the rock foundation, Jesus and they would begin forthwith to build their Church, and the gates of hell should not prevail against it.

‘ And it came to pass
That as they were departing from him
Peter saith to Jesus
Lord, Master
It is good for us to be here
If thou wilt
Let us make here three tabernacles
One for thee
And one for Moses
And one for Elias
For he knew not what he said
For they were struck with fear.’

But even while Peter's voice thus broke the mysterious silence, something yet stranger came upon them. The light in which they were enveloped seemed itself to be covered in a cloud. The cloud came down upon them; it overshadowed them; in some mystic way they seemed themselves to be taken up within it.

'And when Aaron spoke
To all the assembly of the children of Israel
They looked towards the wilderness
And behold
The glory of the Lord appeared in a cloud.'
Exodus xvi, 10.

'The Lord said to Moses
So now I will come to thee
In the darkness of a cloud
That the people may hear me speaking to thee
And may believe thee for ever.'
Exodus xix, 9.

'And now the third day was come
And the morning appeared
And behold thunders began to be heard
And lightning to flash
And a very thick cloud to cover the mount

. . . .

Moses spoke to God
And God answered him.'
Exodus xix, 16–19.

'And when the Lord was come down in a cloud
Moses stood with him
Calling upon the name of the Lord
And when he passed before him he said
O the Lord
The Lord God
Merciful and gracious
Patient and of much compassion.'
Exodus xxxiv, 5, 6.

'The cloud covered the tabernacle of the testimony
And the glory of the Lord filled it
Neither could Moses go into the tabernacle of the covenant
The cloud covering all things

And the majesty of the Lord shining
For the cloud covered all.'
Exodus lx, 32, 33.

'And it came to pass
When the priests were come out of the sanctuary
That a cloud filled the house of the Lord
And the priests could not stand to minister
Because of the cloud
For the glory of the Lord
Had filled the house of the Lord
Then Solomon said
The Lord said
That he would dwell in a cloud
Building I have built a house
For thy dwelling
To be thy most firm throne for ever.'
3 Kings viii, 10–13.

As the cloud came over them, and drew them into itself, all these memories and more surged up in their minds. They had seen Moses, they had seen Elias, they had seen the glory of the Son of Man; but now was a still greater thing, they were enveloped in the glory of God Himself. And even as they knelt there paralysed with awe, from the midst of the cloud they heard a voice, if indeed it was a voice, which said:

'This is my beloved Son
In whom I am well pleased
Hear ye him.'

They had heard the words before. They remembered. They were the words recorded by their former master, the Baptist, that day when he baptized Jesus at the Jordan. They were the first sign by which He had been recognized by one far more capable of seeing than themselves.

'And the disciples hearing
Fell upon their faces
And were very much afraid.'

They could not do otherwise. In the overwhelming manifested presence of God they could only lie down in fear; even Moses had been told that he could not see the face of God and live. They lay there prone upon the ground; they were being given that which no man before had been given, or would ever be given again. The mystery of the Transfiguration stands alone in the record of Jesus, a mystery authentic and insoluble, from men of goodwill, from its very nature, compelling belief. So years afterwards Peter interpreted its meaning when he wrote:

'For we have not
By following artificial fables
Made known to you the power and presence
Of our Lord Jesus Christ
But we were eyewitnesses of his greatness
For he received from God the Father
Honour and glory
This voice coming down to him
From the excellent glory
This is my beloved Son
In whom I am well pleased
Hear ye him
And this voice we heard
Brought from heaven
When we were with him in the holy mount.'
2 Peter i, 16–18.

Scarcely had the words been uttered than there came a change. The sense of awe, the sense of being lost in the unknown, passed away; they felt the cold earth beneath them, the cold morning air blowing over them, they were themselves once more. Still they dared not move. They were afraid; they could only await what might befall. They were on holy ground, and, if they moved, the hand of God might touch them.

Presently a hand did touch them. It touched them and a quiet voice said:

'Arise
And fear not.'

It was the familiar voice; it was the familiar expression. How many times already had that voice bid them not to be afraid; how often had they heard it say, 'Arise'!

'Fear not
From henceforth thou shalt catch men.'
'Why are you fearful
O ye of little faith?'

‘It is I
Fear not.’
‘If they have called the goodman of the house Beelzebub
How much more them of his household
Therefore fear them not.’
‘I say to you, my friends
Be not afraid of them who kill the body
And are not able to kill the soul.’
‘Fear not therefore
You are of more value than many sparrows.’

They heard the words; they knew who was speaking; this bravest of brave men whose simple call filled them with new courage. They knew who was touching them; this Man whose touch cured all evils, and cast out devils, and raised the dead, and multiplied the bread, and gave peace to sinners, and made the miserable happy. In the strength of that touch they raised their faces from the ground. The brilliant light was gone, the cloud had scattered, Moses and Elias were not there. There was ‘only Jesus’; only the carpenter of Nazareth, only the Son of the living God.

‘And they immediately
Lifting up their eyes
Looking about
Saw no man any more
But only Jesus with them.’

Rapidly the old familiarity came back, the old security, the old courage, the old unconscious assumption that so long as He was present all was well. Great men inspire greatness; strong men inspire strength; true men inspire trust and confidence; the closing of this scene is eloquent proof that Jesus inspired all three. And great men are great without arrogance; strong men are gentle in their strength; true men are simple, transparent, guileless, so that others may with ease see through their very souls and not fear. As this group of four joined together, and turned to come down the mountain in the morning light, none was more conspicuous than another. A stranger might have met them and would never have known that One among them was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose glory a few moments before had been so conspicuously revealed. Such is the greatness, the strength, the truth of the greatest, the strongest, the truest Man of men.

They began their descent in silence. On the mountain the night had passed away; over the hills beyond the Lake of Galilee the dawn was turning the autumn sky to red and gold. They came down the western slope which was still in shadow, making for the little town from which they had ascended. It was inevitable that their minds should be filled with the wonders of that night; equally inevitable was it that they could say not a word about it. Presently He spoke. He alluded to what they had seen. He spoke with emphasis, solemnly impressing upon them the importance of what He said. The vision they had seen, for the present at least, was for themselves alone; no other was to know of it till the Son of Man be risen from the dead.

‘ And as they came down from the mountain
Jesus charged them saying
Tell the vision to no man
Till the Son of Man be risen again from the dead.’

Peter, James, and John did as they were told; they kept the secret of that night-watch to themselves. By this time they had come to realize, from His treatment of them more than from anything He said, that in some way He was making them a group apart, separated from the rest. They had felt it on the day when He took them alone into the house of Jairus; now, when He had given them this wondrous vision, they were sure. From that time, when convenient opportunity afforded, those three would meet together and confer on many things. They would look back to the first days when, with Andrew, they had discovered this Man and had been won by Him. They would recall the meeting at Bethsaida, when He had come Himself to their fishing stakes, and had invited them specially to follow Him. They would remind each other of this event and that, the miracle at Cana, the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob, the times He had raised the dead, His forgiveness of sins, His extremes of meekness and power, and every time there would grow among them greater faith and greater love.

Nevertheless that other mystery always left them wondering. ‘Till the Son of Man be risen from the dead’! What could this mean? At the beginning He had said that His enemies might destroy the Temple, pointing to Himself, and in three days He would build it up again.

Some at least who heard Him had understood Him literally; but they were His enemies, who did not know that He was the Son of God, the King of Israel. A few days ago, in Magedan, He had said something akin to this to the Pharisees and Scribes; they had asked Him for a sign and He had refused to give them any but the sign of Jonas the prophet. Of late He had begun to say much about a coming doom, but had usually given an assurance that three days after He would rise again. What could He mean? Could the Son of Man ever die? Could He die a death so shameful? Could the King of Israel be put to death before He had ascended His throne? As for rising again from the dead, could the dead ever rise of their own accord? They questioned and they pondered, but found no solution. They called it a parable which they could not understand; some day, perhaps, He would tell them.

Meanwhile as they descended they fell into their old familiar ways. They had just heard Him called, by a voice from heaven, 'My beloved Son'; it had been an official approval, given by the Father Himself, of Peter's recent confession. Of that there could now be no doubt; still it raised certain other problems. There was, for example, the problem concerning Elias. They had always been told, it was an old tradition which none would dare to contradict, that before the Messias appeared Elias would return to earth. The Pharisees and Scribes always taught it; on this account they had questioned John the Baptist by the Jordan; because Elias had not yet come they had said that Jesus could not be what He claimed. Some had gone halfway; they had thought that perhaps Jesus was Himself Elias come again. They would ask Him. The Pharisees must surely know; they would not be altogether wrong. Still, since He had come, and Elias had not preceded Him, there must be some mistake. With such questions could these chosen three busy themselves within an hour of the Transfiguration!

'And his disciples asked him saying
Why then do the Pharisees and scribes say
That Elias must come first?'

Jesus seemed almost to expect their question. In spite of His assurances, in spite of His recommendations, these good men could never quite leave the Scribes and Pharisees alone ; in spite of His warnings some of their leaven had got in among them and they were always anxious. He gave them their answer, but partly in enigma ; yet again not so enigmatic but that they might understand. 'Elias must come first ?' Yes, indeed, but before which manifestation ? The Son of Man will come again ; of that He has already spoken, but will soon say more. When that day shall come the spirit of Elias will restore all things in the Lord. But long before that day other things must happen ; before the triumph must come the eclipse. He has told them, He will tell them again, that the Son of Man must suffer and die. Still they might ask about the present coming. Yes, even now the spirit of Elias had preceded Him. The spirit, not the letter ; had He not warned them already of this evil that lurked among the Pharisees and Scribes ? Would they never learn to interpret the letter, and not to make of it an unworthy bondage ?

'But he answering said
Elias indeed shall come
And when he shall come first
He shall restore all things
And as it is written of the Son of Man
That he must suffer many things
And be despised
But I say to you
That Elias is already come
And they knew him not
But have done unto him whatsoever they would
As it is written of him
So also
The Son of Man shall suffer from them
Then the disciples understood
That he had spoken to them of John the Baptist.'

Thus much they understood, but little more. The rest they could not and would not understand. That Jesus should suffer as the Baptist had suffered was impossible. It was a contradiction ; it was a parable ; it was a mystery ; it was anything but the truth ; what it meant would be explained in time, even if He did not explain it to them Himself.

CHAPTER XXI

66. The Demoniac

AT the foot of Thabor on its north-western side, where it slopes into the valley of Esdraelon, lies a little town which would almost seem to have burrowed itself into the mountain-side. There may be seen the little houses cut into the rock, with square blocks built up against them, thus making two rooms; there one might walk from the road on to the roofs of the houses, illustrating vividly the last warnings of Jesus. The town was not on any regular high road; still it was a busy place, with the valley to be tilled in front of it, and markets for its produce not far away, at Tiberias, and Magdala, and Capharnaum. The people were simple countrymen, in most ways unspoilt; dwelling near enough to the stream of life to hear of the wonderful things that had of late been happening, but not near enough to win much attention from Pharisees and leaders who gathered by the lake.

In this little town Jesus had left the nine the day before, when He had ascended the mountain with the three. They had understood; they had not missed Him; they had grown accustomed to absences like this by night. While they waited they had spent their time either in sleep or in preaching. But unfortunately it seemed that all had not gone well. Among others a demoniac boy had been brought to them, and for once their powers of healing had deserted them. Their ill-success had disconcerted them; many attempts had been made and all had failed; their failure, following on the absence of the Master, had made them not a little uneasy. What was worse, they had chanced upon a group of Scribes who had come into the town. These men, with their lore, had proved too much for them. They had made great game of their failure to heal the demoniac, and had held them up to ridicule; as for their teaching, well, the Master left them for the present to themselves, and the poor nine were no match for these doctors learned in the Law.

When then in the morning Jesus came down the mountain-side, signs of disturbance were evident below Him. From the slope of the hill the whole village could be seen at a glance spread before Him at His feet. Higher up the street that meandered between the scattered houses was an excited group, deeply engrossed with something that lay on the ground in its midst. Nearer to the four as they descended was another smaller group of men evidently wrangling. Among them very soon they recognized the nine they had left behind, excited, gesticulating, restless, surrounded by a number of contemptuous Scribes; it was easy to see from their manner that their friends were being worsted in a contest. There were others looking on, pitying the nine, but none the less suspicious that they were being beaten.

At first the groups in the village were too wholly taken up with their respective interests to notice the four descending from the mountain. These came to the outskirts of the houses; at once they were recognized. Jesus was again among them all, and His coming brought with it a new atmosphere. The wrangling ceased; the Scribes knew that now they would not have it all their own way, the nine dropped their efforts at self-defence and were confidently happy. Up the street beyond, the men in the group, as soon as they saw Him, left the object round which they were gathered and hurried to meet Him. There was a cry of welcome; there were signs and salutations; here at last, it was evident, the mistrust and desertion visible in Capharnaum had not yet set in.

Jesus received these voluble and simple countrymen with His usual quiet and patience. He was almost unstirred, yet they knew that He did not repel them; He was the Master, yet was He also one of themselves, the shepherd with authority standing in the midst of His flock. For a few minutes the crowd pressed upon Him and there was confusion; presently, when at last He could be heard, He turned to His nine and asked them:

'What do you question about among you?'

It seemed a simple question enough, yet was it apparently no easy one to answer. The nine looked at one another;

they did not care to confess their failure ; this time they had not Simon Peter with them to formulate what was in their minds. On the other side the Scribes hesitated ; in His presence they did not dare to put His followers to shame ; long since had they learnt that there was no surer way of stirring His wrath and indignation.

But soon both sides found an unexpected spokesman. As the crowd stood round, silently awaiting the issue of this contest, a man from the background pushed his way through it to the front ; a poor working man, of middle age, with a face that showed he was intent on something that deeply concerned him. Of those about him he took no account, neither of the learned Scribes nor of the nine. While others hesitated he came forward, while they took counsel with themselves, he fell on his knees before Jesus. With appealing eyes he looked into His face, then, in his rough, unguarded way, as a countryman will, in a torrent of words from the fulness of his heart he poured out his tale of woe.

‘ Master ’, he said,
‘ I have brought my son to thee
Having a dumb spirit
Look upon my son
Have pity on my son
Because he is my only one
And is a lunatic
And suffereth much
For he falleth often into the fire
And often into the water
And lo a spirit seizeth him
And he suddenly crieth out
And wheresoever he taketh him
Dasheth him
And throweth him down
And teareth him
And bruising him
He hardly departeth from him
And he foameth
And gnasheth with the teeth
And pineth away
And I brought him
And desired thy disciples to cast him out
And they could not cure him.’

So this was the cause of all the trouble. The nine had endeavoured to cast out a devil and for once had failed. It had all taken place that morning, while Jesus and the three had been coming down the hill. The drama was only too clear; the coming of the labourer with his mad son, the gathering of the curious crowd, the appeal to the nine and their efforts to respond again and again repeated; their failure, their surprise, their humiliation because of this unexpected set-back; the people shocked, almost scandalized, because of this single ill-success; the titter of ridicule and contempt that had run through the less believing section; the coming of the Scribes, their delight at this unforeseen event; their joining in the ridicule, their adding abuse, their ending in argument and objection which these poor men were utterly unable to solve; finally the dejected, excited, anxious state in which their Master had found them. He had seemed to themselves long in coming.

Jesus listened to the man's long tale, looking down upon him undisturbed. He who had compassion on the multitudes had still more compassion on a single suppliant; a parent's distress in particular He had never been able to resist. What then He would do now none who knew Him could doubt; the manner of the appeal to Him was irresistible.

'Look upon my son
Have pity on my son
Because he is my only one
And is a lunatic
And suffereth much.'

Still there was a lesson to be taught, not least to the curious crowd that stood around. For a long time now, as we have seen, Jesus had adopted a new attitude to the men of Galilee. He had been less lavish in His working of miracles. He had begun to speak to them in parables, and in language less easy to understand. He had absented Himself from their country for long periods. Continually He had warned them that all this was because they would not learn what He had to teach them. From His deeds, from His words, from the evidence of Himself they would not draw the only right conclusion. They would look only to themselves and their own advantage, the healing of their sick, their own feeding, the kingdom and the conquest which was now to be theirs; Himself, who and what He must be and was, they refused to conclude.

Moreover in this case there was the man himself to consider. He had begun well, but he had yet a long way to go; and before He sent him away relieved Jesus would draw him on to the furthest limit of which he was capable. As with the official at Cana, as with the centurion at Capharnaum, as with the ruler of the synagogue, Jairus, as with the Canaanite woman hard by Tyre, so with this man, by a little hesitation He would lift him higher. Faith of a kind he had shown, therefore he should be drawn to more. Jesus grew stern; by His manner and His words He showed them that the fault lay less with His disciples than with the people round about. He used language which they could not mistake, not at least the Scribes, ringing as it was with the notes of the prophetical warnings of old. He looked out upon the gathered crowd; He looked in particular, with unflinching eye, at the group of Scribes that stood beside Him. Then in mixed indignation and appeal, with that strange combination of strength and gentleness which we have so often seen, He cried out:

> 'O unbelieving and perverse generation
> How long shall I be with you?
> How long shall I suffer you?
> Bring hither thy son to me.'

Immediately there was further excitement. Men ignored His first words, His signs of indignant disappointment; they were still too busied with themselves to trouble themselves much concerning Him. Down the street the poor victim had been left in the hands of some who acted as his keepers. The cry was raised that he should be brought along, the Master had asked to see him; a group broke off from the rest, and followed the father as he went in search of his stricken son. He was soon produced; a passage through the crowd was easily made, for men shrank from this dangerous creature. Boy as he was they feared him.

And no wonder; in a few minutes they had sufficient proof. They had not yet reached the circle in which Jesus, and the Twelve, and the Scribes were waiting, when the boy caught sight of Jesus where He stood. Immediately his eyes were riveted upon Him; he stared and stared as if his gaze were paralysed, his feet became rooted to the ground, and no power of man was able to move him. The muscles through the whole length of his body tightened; with a lift of his arm he shook off the men that held him; he was not to be handled. Then from within he seemed to be disturbed. The rigidity broke down, the wildest contortions followed, something seemed to throw him to the ground. He raised his hands against his own body and tore at his own flesh, clawing himself, striking himself till he bled, rolling this way and that like a writhing snake, while the shuddering crowd made room for him. The foam came white from his firm-clenched teeth streaming down his chin; the whites of his eyes gleamed ghastly from beneath the open lids.

It was a terrible sight, and it was pitiful, all the more as not one in that awestruck crowd dared venture near the sufferer to help him. Only the father attempted to hold him, but he could do nothing; he could only wait, as he had always had to wait, till the paroxysm was over. He could only watch meanwhile lest the boy do anything to his own destruction. As he hung thus over him, Jesus drew near. He was all attention; He stood as a good physician, as if He were studying the case before He would prescribe. He would almost give the impression that this was something new to His experience. Then when the boy was exhausted, and lay quivering in the father's arms:

'Jesus asked his father
How long is it
Since this happened unto him?'

Again the father became voluble. Jesus as yet had done nothing, though people had told him He had but to speak a word and the devil would be gone. Still He had shown interest; He had asked to see the boy, He had Himself come near, He was now evidently moved by what He saw and had made this enquiry. The man would tell Him all; He would urge his petition; this Jesus, he was sure, would help him if He could, if He only could!

'But he said
From his infancy
And oftentimes hath he cast him into the fire
And into waters

To destroy him
But if thou canst do anything
Help us
Having compassion on us.'

The man's appeal thus ended on the note on which it had begun. It appealed to that compassion of Jesus which, in spite of the sternness and hard words, was manifest in His face. Still it also proved that the faith of the man did not reach far.

'If thou canst do anything!'

Once already the nine had tried and failed; perhaps this was a case beyond the power of Jesus, too. That He was something more than the rest of men the poor man showed that he believed; what He was more, in the trouble that oppressed him, he took no care to think. But Jesus would not stop there; He would not be content just to humour one who had asked Him for help. He would at least sow in him such seeds of truth as he was able to receive. He looked at him steadily; by His very commanding power He would almost compel him to greater faith.

'And Jesus saith to him
If thou canst believe
All things are possible
To him that believeth.'

In answer to this what could the poor man do or say? Jesus was laying down conditions. He would heal his son, but apparently only on set terms. True, they were fair terms; but was he able to accept them? Believe? What was it to believe? And what was he to believe? He did not know; how could he know? It was all a mystery, far too deep for such a mind as his. Still he must do what he could; at all costs he must do what he could. Jesus had the power, that was now clear; He was willing to use it; He had the right to make His terms; the poor man's only duty was to submit. Then he would. He would go as far as he knew how; he would shut his eyes and put blind faith in this Man, taking all the consequences, whatever the Scribes might say. He would fight with himself if he doubted; he would ask this Jesus to help him; if now he had not faith enough to please Him, perhaps Jesus would teach him, would enlighten him, would help him to believe yet more, what he ought and how. As he knelt there in the road, with his boy's head resting on his knee, he looked up into the eyes of the strong Man standing over him. The tears came streaming from his eyes; helpless tears, of one who would fain do much and could not. Almost frantic with the strain:

'Immediately
The father of the boy crying out with tears
Said, Lord
I do believe
Help my unbelief.'

It was enough and more than enough. From the first he had been humble, and true, and sorrowful.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit
Blessed are the meek
Blessed are they that mourn
For they shall be comforted
Come to me
All you that labour and are burthened
And I will refresh you.'

Of all this Jesus could scarcely have a more living example than the man before Him. Evidently he fondly loved his son; not every man would have loved his son in like condition; therefore all the greater was his sorrow. The issue none who knew Jesus could doubt.

Meanwhile the crowd was growing every minute more dense. Those from up the village had joined the rest; from the cottages and fields men were hurrying to the scene of interesting things. Jesus in the midst looked at the boy. The foam still hung about his mouth; the whole frame was exhausted. He looked at the boy; the spirit of command again came upon Him. He uttered words that threatened a creature unseen; He rebuked it for what it had done; then came the command, which no power in heaven, or earth, or hell was able to withstand.

'And when Jesus saw the multitudes running together
He threatened and rebuked the unclean spirit
Saying to him
Deaf and dumb spirit

I command thee
Go out of him
And enter not any more into him.'

There followed a great shriek, a yell that was unearthly. With a leap that no man of himself could make the boy sprang into the air. As he fell to the earth he again clawed his flesh, tearing it till the blood flowed. Then on a sudden all was silence. He lay there on his face still and motionless. Men about were afraid to come near; another paroxysm might come on at any moment; even the father could do no more than stand helplessly by and wring his hands. They waited on, struck dumb; there was not a movement; the boy lay helplessly, listlessly, where he had last fallen; one might have thought that the life had gone out of him. Soon, indeed, this suspicion ran among the crowd.

'He is dead',

men began to whisper in awe to one another, and were the more afraid.

Jesus stood by unmoved. He had spoken the word and now awaited its effect; not until the whispering began among the crowd did He move. Then He stepped forward to the spot where the boy lay. He bent down to the ground over him; in His own right hand He took the boy's right hand lying helplessly upon the road. He drew it upwards towards Him; at once the arm, then the head, then the whole body responded. Peacefully and quietly, as if he were waking from sleep, the boy began to look about him; he was not dead, he was alive and well.

Then came the touching ceremony, the little act of courtesy characteristic of Jesus Christ. We have already seen, on a parallel occasion, how He raised a boy to life, and then with a graceful gesture took him by the hand and placed him in his widowed mother's arms. We have seen Him do the like when He raised the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue. So here, to this rough countryman, He is no less courteous. Now that the miracle has been accomplished there is no assumption, no superiority, no distinction, no vindication of Himself before His enemies; even the hardness of a few minutes past is all gone. He takes the boy by the hand; He helps him to stand upon his feet; like a mother He puts His arm about him and leads him forward. He brings him to his father; He leaves the two locked in each other's embrace; and while they are lost in the ecstasy of it all He slips away up into the town.

'But Jesus taking him by the hand
Lifted him up
And he arose
And the child was cured from that hour
And he restored him to his father.'

He slipped away, He avoided the honours of the multitude. Since the feeding of the five thousand, when they proclaimed Him the prophet and wished to make Him King, and yet next day in great numbers turned back and walked with Him no more, He had carefully avoided their applause, even to a great extent their very company. Only in Decapolis had He let men gather about Him; but, as we have seen, they were men very different from those of Galilee. With these last His work was almost done; they were not yet capable of receiving more. He would not altogether leave them; they should still have favours bestowed upon them; but they were sheep without shepherds, and it was the shepherds above all else that He must now train. During the remainder of the time that He stays in Galilee we shall find Him confining His attention almost entirely to them.

Meanwhile of the gathered crowd

'All were astonished
At the mighty power of God.'

Poor labourers of that country-side, let them enjoy their astonishment. It was at least something, indeed it was much; so far as it went it was genuine. But its range was small, its foundations were shallow, a single shock and it would topple over. That very morning a breath had shaken it and it had wavered.

Jesus with the Twelve came to the house where the nine had lain the night before. As they walked up the rough, and narrow, and winding street between the uncouth, irregular cottages of this unfrequented hamlet, they were very silent. The event of that morning had made them ponder much. Jesus had cured the demoniac boy and so in some way had saved their reputation. Nevertheless it remained against them that they had failed. They had undertaken to cure him and had failed; they had failed for the first time since, before the Pasch, He had given them the power and sent them out to use it. What had made them fail? So far as they could see the case was much the same as many others. They must ask Him. Now they thought of it they remembered that He Himself of late had apparently found difficulty in working miracles. For instance there was the deaf mute in Decapolis, and again the blind man outside Bethsaida Julias. In each case He had gone through a special ceremony; perhaps they ought to have done the same. They brought Him to the house; they waited till the stragglers from the crowd had scattered to their homes; it would not do that others should overhear. Then, when they were alone,

'The disciples came secretly to Jesus
And asked him
Why could not we cast him out?'

It was evident at once that He was prepared for their question. He let them see that He was not satisfied; would He ever be satisfied? Let them give Him all they could, the hungry heart of this Jesus Christ would always ask for more. With them at least, the shepherds that were to be, the foundation on which His Church was to be built, He would never be content. He looked at them; not despondently, yet not entirely with approval. Before, when they had returned from their great mission, He had welcomed them, and had made them glad; now, when they had done so much more, He was less consoling. They did not understand; but the day would come when they would.

'But Jesus said to them
Because of your unbelief
For I say to you
If you have faith
As a grain of mustard seed
You shall say to this mountain
Remove from hence hither
And it shall be done
And nothing shall be impossible to you.'

They were tremendous words; so tremendous that even to this day, and so it will be till the end of time, men hesitate and hesitate concerning their meaning, forgetting that the words of Jesus Christ are true.

A strange answer to their question, but it was not all. When He had thus encouraged them, almost bribed them, to yet greater faith,—what they had so far given was less than a grain of mustard seed, what they had done in His name was as nothing to what they yet might do,—then He turned again to their enquiry. Why had they been unable to cast this devil out?

'This kind', he said
Can go out by nothing
But by prayer and fasting.'

Here was something quite new. In the early days the complaint had been brought against them, not only by the Pharisees but also by their old friends, the adherents of John the Baptist, that whereas they and their disciples fasted, the disciples of Jesus did not. And on that occasion He had defended them; He had said that He, the Bridegroom, was still with them, and that therefore the time of fasting was not yet. Now on a sudden He seemed to change. If they were to use to the full the powers He had bestowed upon them, they must needs prepare themselves by fasting and by prayer. The prayer, in some measure, they could understand; if there was a lesson they had learnt from His example it was that of constant recourse to prayer.

67. Another Prophecy of the Passion

The object of His journey to Thabor was accomplished, and He must move on. It was true that because of His long absence the opposition of the enemy had died down. The emissaries from Jerusalem had gone home, to wait there till He should again appear. Still, though they had departed, He would not stop long in any place. As soon as He had landed in Magedan but a few weeks ago, the Pharisees and Sadducees had got wind of it, and had at once come upon the scene. Here at the foot of Thabor, though He had not been in the village a whole day, yet His followers had found themselves confronted by a band of Scribes. Though the time for the decisive battle was imminent, yet would He wait a little longer; the feast of Tabernacles was drawing near and then, as before He had chosen festivals to mark His changes, He would begin. In the meantime He would stay in Galilee, moving to and fro to escape too much notice, preparing His Twelve and Himself.

But in which direction should He go? He was in the south-east of Galilee. Samaria lay to the south, but He would not go there; it was enough to pass through that alien land on His way to and from Judæa. The country to the east, beyond the Lake of Galilee, He had just visited. There was Judæa; but to go into Judæa was to walk into the lion's jaws. For in Jerusalem deep hatred awaited Him, hatred that would never forgive; and for that hatred to be vented upon Him it was not yet the time. There remained only Galilee; here if He lay more quiet, and moved on from place to place, He might remain for some time longer unmolested. He would stay, then, for a while in Galilee. He would traverse the country once more, this time not in a missionary spirit, but rather as an exile from the larger towns, praying for it now that the seed had already been sown.

'And departing from thence
They passed through Galilee
And he would not that any man should know it
For he would not walk in Judæa
Because the Jews sought
To kill him.'

'The Jews sought to kill him'. One asks oneself whether in the whole of the Gospel narrative there is any sentence more significant than this. From the very first day on which Jesus appeared as a Teacher in Jerusalem the opposition and hatred had grown. Then they sought to kill Him on the meagre ground that by healing a cripple He had broken the Sabbath. But the real reason, even at that early date, went deeper. Already by His action in the Temple He had shaken the authority of the priests; without any sanction from them He had set Himself up as a preacher by the Jordan; when He did break the Sabbath He made no other defence than that of independent authority from God, whom He dared to call His Father. They had in their minds the prophecies, no less had He; strive as they might they could find no contradiction between their foretelling and His claim. But they had also their traditions, their development of a theory as to the kind of man the Messias was to be, and this He wholly contradicted. He was utterly unlike what they had trained themselves to expect. Lastly was their own position and prerogative. Let this kind of arrogance go on, let Him be accepted by

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the people, and their own position was doomed. That temporal protection which at present they possessed, under the wings of the all-shadowing eagle of Rome, would be lost to them ; they would no longer be able to bend the people to their will by their literal laws and regulations ; they would not any longer find a shelter for themselves, their revenues, their lives of luxury, behind the barrier of forms and ceremonies. Assuming they were the true sons of Abraham, it was easy to conclude that their enemy was the enemy of God Himself; assuming that He was the enemy of God it was easy to justify His death, no matter what might be the pretext.

Thus had the leaven of the Pharisees been doing its work in Jerusalem from the beginning, and therefore Jesus had left it. In Galilee it had taken a longer time to spread. For months He had carried all before Him, and the people had refused to listen to the insinuations made against Him. But of late the change had come. The Pharisees and Sadducees, the priests and Scribes, the Herodians and lawyers, had united their forces and at last had gained a hearing. So marked had been the change, so outspoken had the enemy become, that even the Twelve had begun to be afraid as they had never been before. In Judæa, in the early days, they had paid little heed to the opposition. They had learnt under John, and even he had been treated with suspicion. Given the conditions, such suspicion was only to be expected ; that their new Master Jesus should meet with the same was at that time nothing strange. In Galilee, at first, all had been a march of conquest ; it had culminated in their own successes, acting as His lieutenants. With their power of working miracles, and with their confidence in Him to support them, they had given little attention to the Scribes who had hissed their complaints and hidden their hatred and discomfiture beneath the garb of contempt, in the streets of the towns and villages where they met them. But now the atmosphere was changed. Suspicion had appeared in the air. The people, though they wondered still, were by no means as eager as they had been. There were no longer the overwhelming crowds, no longer the cries of welcome to greet the Great Prophet. They were sure He would win in the end ; in the end the kingdom would be founded ; but at present they felt and confessed to one another that their cause was passing through a crisis.

But to none was all this known, and by none was it better understood, than by their Master Himself; and in several ways of late He had shown that He was affected by the knowledge. From the first, before His enemies He had never flinched; but now He seemed anxious to avoid them. Since He had come into Galilee He had spared Himself in nothing that men might come to know Him; now He seemed deliberately to hide Himself from them. Before, His miracles had flowed from Him as easily as His very breath; now they were fewer, they appeared to be made with more effort, when they were performed He seemed to make little of them. In the first days He had been all brightness, and hope, and encouragement, and assurance of victory; then He had shown to others only sympathy, and friendliness, and peace. Of late He had become as one who had been hurt; He had complained of desertion, of want of faith, of failure, of being unknown. He had betaken Himself more to seclusion and prayer, wandering from place to place more like an outcast than a Leader. His words were no longer the inspiring things they had heard on the mountain behind Capharnaum; they constantly recurred to yet more impending doom, they were almost the words of a heart-broken man.

So at least these Twelve felt as they followed Him, in an almost aimless way, about the lanes and by-ways of Galilee. As they went along He would talk with them; sitting beneath the trees by the roadside they would eat their meal. Then the spirit would come upon Him, and regularly He would end upon the same warning note. They had heard it often of late; since the great day at Cæsarea Philippi it had not been uncommon; but during this last tour through Galilee it would seem to have been repeated with greater emphasis. Jesus loved His own better than they knew; better than they He beheld what was coming. He must prepare them; He must make them safe. That they should be scandalized because of what He had to suffer was an added agony which already had begun; but He must defend them against the worst.

'And when they abode in Galilee
While all wondered at all the things he did
Jesus taught his disciples
And said to them

Lay you up in your hearts these words
For it shall come to pass
That the Son of Man shall be betrayed
And delivered into the hands of men
And they shall kill him
And after that he is killed
He shall rise again the third day.'

Certainly the words were clear and explicit enough, and were uttered with an emphasis that might have won for them acceptance. But they seemed too great a contradiction. As to the Pharisees, it was impossible that Jesus of Nazareth could be the Messias, so to the Twelve the supposition that their Master could at last be betrayed, that He could ever be a helpless prisoner,—He, the conqueror of devils !—that He could in the end be put to death—He who could at will raise the dead to life !—was impossible, unintelligible. As for the last, that after He had been killed He would rise again, to them it had just no meaning whatsoever. Dead men did not rise again of their own accord ; in that precisely lay the whole significance of death ; and until He explained Himself more clearly there was no more to be said. Still they would not ask Him what He meant. When before He had spoken in parables He had shown them their meaning later ; now He was speaking in parables, not to the people but to themselves. They were troubled, they were afraid, but they would wait for a solution.

' But they understood not the word
And it was hid from them
So that they perceived it not
And they were troubled exceedingly
And were afraid to ask him
Concerning the word.'

68. The Temple Tax

At length after many months of absence, by far the longest since He had first made His home in Capharnaum, Jesus made His way once more to the city which was called ' His own '. This time His home-coming was a very different thing from what it had been before. In the early days we have seen how the people of Capharnaum were ever loath to part with Him, how when He returned they crowded the lanes to meet Him, how when He took up His abode among them they pressed about Him night and day, to hear His word, to bring Him their sick that He might heal them, or for the mere joy of being in His company. To-day it was all very different. On the Pasch, some six months before, the tide had turned when

> ‘ Many of his disciples went back
> And walked no more with him.’

After that had followed open hostility from the Pharisees. He had answered them boldly, so boldly that even the Twelve had been shocked, and had hinted to Him not to be imprudent. Then He had left the place, and had not returned. He had gone away into Syria ; He had disappeared, and little news since then had been heard of Him. During all this time both the Pharisees and those who had ‘ walked no more with Him ’ had had the city in their hands. When He came again into its streets He found it a very different Capharnaum from that which He had left.

They had scarcely settled down in the house when a very little event made manifest this change of attitude. Jesus had entered the cottage to rest ; Simon Peter with others were out in the streets, no doubt on errands, for they had been long away, no doubt also to hear what was the talk in the bazaar. Were men still saying that the Master was John the Baptist, or perhaps Elias, or Jeremias, or one of the prophets ? Or were they inclining to the belief that He cast out devils by Beelzebub ?

Their fears were soon confirmed. Though there were still many who held to the old views, nevertheless they heard less now of the miracles ; they heard more of violation of the Sabbath, of disregard of customs, of undue favours given to others besides the true children of Abraham, of the need of more certain signs from one who professed to be the true Messias, of reverence due to the powers that be, whether spiritual or temporal, of their own caste inferiority and manners. More alarming still, there were insinuations that Capharnaum, indeed all the country, was better without Jesus than with Him ; that He was a danger rather than a blessing ; that if He were put out of the way He would not be greatly missed.

Simon and his companions came home troubled in mind with all they had seen and heard. Certainly during their absence their cause had gone terribly backward. To restore their prestige they would need to go with caution. They must be careful to give no offence ; they must humour the people ; they must impress upon the Master the necessity of prudence ; some things they must take into their own hands. As they came along they met some Temple officials, with their collecting tablets and purses in their hands. They greeted one another ; they were very friendly. Presently the conversation turned to business ; one of them took out his tablet and asked :

'Doth not your Master pay the didrachma ?'

Simon Peter was taken aback. Never before had such a question been put to him ; that it should be asked here in the streets was certainly an ominous sign of the times. The tax had been due in March or April and it was now October. In the days when it had been due the city was in a ferment of enthusiasm about Him, and none would have dreamt of asking Him for money who was already giving them so much. Now evidently impressions had changed ; what He had done men were quickly forgetting or suspecting. He was a man like the rest after all ; and like the rest He ought to pay His due. Simon Peter was sensitive. He took in the situation at once. There was opposition, suspicion in the air, and on no account must fuel be added to the fire. Besides, his Master was always deferent to the higher powers ; if He were asked to pay a tax, Simon was sure He would pay it. Again Peter was the head ; here was a case in which he might be expected to judge the matter for himself. Without further thought he would be bold. He would commit his Master ; these men must not be made antagonistic. Promptly then he answered :

'Yes',

and turned away, as if he were surprised that such a question should be asked. It was the first time Peter had been beaten by a sudden challenge ; alas ! it was not to be the last.

But Peter suffered, as we have more than once seen already, from sudden reactions. He was a man of extremes ; at one moment bold unto death, at the next timid as an infant, especially afraid of himself. Scarcely had he turned aside than he began to search himself concerning the liberty he had taken. During all these months, in matter of fact, Jesus had not paid the tax ; was it possible He would not wish to pay it? Was it possible He would not approve of what he, Simon, had said? He went down the street and entered the house pondering. How should he tell the Master what he had done?

He had not to ponder long; before he could speak Jesus had something to say to him.

‘And when he was come into the house
Jesus prevented them saying
What is thy opinion, Simon?
The kings of the earth
Of whom do they exact tribute or custom
Of their own children
Or of strangers?’

So the secret was out! Jesus knew all that had happened; and from the manner of the question Simon knew at once that he had blundered. How much wiser it would have been to have consulted the Master; to answer for Him, and so to commit Him on his own authority, was arrogant, to say the least. Still he must give some reply; and to such a question only one answer was possible. Kings do not tax their own families, so far as he knew anything of kings, they tax their subjects; they tax foreigners; there was nothing more to be said.

‘And he said
Of strangers.’

At once Jesus took him up. Simon, He seemed to say, is not this tax imposed for the maintenance of My Father's house? And am I not, have you not declared me to be, the true Son of that Father? And are you not in particular my brethren, specially children of that Father? How then could you boldly answer ‘Yes’? Clearly, by right, we are under no obligation. Still you have committed us and I will stand by you. These men shall have no reason to complain, either of Me for my refusal, or of you for your rash promise. They shall not be scandalized; for the sake of charity we will pay, if not for justice. You need not ask Judas for the money; we will pay our tax in our own way. Go down to the sea. There you will take a fish. In its mouth you will find a stater, that is, two didrachmas, just enough for two. Pay it for us both.*

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* The didrachma was worth about 1s. 3d. in English money, the stater 2s. 6d.

'Jesus said to him
Then the children are free
But that we may not scandalize them
Go to the sea
And cast in a hook
And that fish which shall first come up
Take
And when thou hast opened its mouth
Thou shalt find a stater
Take that
And give it to them
For me and thee.'

This was indeed a gentle method of rebuke. The soul of Simon Peter was relieved. Unlike any other instance in the Gospels, the story stops abruptly ; we are not told whether or how Peter fulfilled his commission. But we need not doubt. We can see him hurry down to the water's edge. He takes his boat, he casts in his hook and line. The fish is caught ; anxiously he opens its mouth. The stater is there ; he carries it away to the collectors. As he does so he reflects once more on the way the Master has chosen him apart, and done for him wonderful things.

CHAPTER XXII

69. Lessons to the Twelve

FOR a short time they settled in the little cottage at Capharnaum. There were no longer the crowds hanging about the door to molest them; now they had an abundance of leisure in which to eat and take their rest. The Twelve no longer said of Him : ‘ He is going mad ’ ; they only wondered what was meant by His warnings of coming doom. That during these last months there had been a great falling away could not be doubted. The multitudes no longer followed them, they were less impressed by what the Master said or did. The enemy had grown stronger and more confident ; their insinuations and remarks had told among the people. The Twelve themselves had come to fear them more, were increasingly anxious that they should not be offended, with the men in the market-place were more apologetic, less assumptive.

Still during all this period of growing depression, more than ever the confidence and assertion of the Master had stood out. When the crowds forsook Him He was independent of them ; when the Pharisees became more aggressive He merely shook them off ; when the Twelve showed fear He rebuked them. He went about the country-side as if it were His own ; and though they knew there were many who would gladly have His life, yet not one dared to touch Him.

Thus they contrasted one side with the other, and assured themselves that all would yet be well. He would win through in the end ; the Kingdom would yet be founded ; He would yet be King, and they would be His faithful servants. He had promised it and He would not fail. He had gone so far as already to make Simon the head-man of the Kingdom ; that was assurance enough. But what of the rest ? Of them as yet He had said nothing. James and John He had taken with Simon Peter for special witnesses, and that could well be understood, but so far even they had received no special rank, eager as they were, especially John, to be in the forefront. No doubt all would come in time; meanwhile it would be well, by way of preparation, to turn these matters over among themselves.

During this last tour round Galilee, after they left the foot of Thabor, this subject had been much in their minds. As they moved along Jesus would be much alone; of late He had shown Himself disposed to spend His time in silence. Behind Him at a safe distance, and out of hearing, they discussed each other's qualities, for government, for administration, for preaching, for miracles, for influence, for tact, for judgement, for leadership, for all the multitudinous necessities that would be essential if they were to conquer the world. Indeed they were serious about it; sometimes they talked louder, more vehemently, than they meant. They were very important, these doughty chosen ones of Christ, for did not all the future of all earth and all heaven depend upon them? If at times they forgot themselves they were to be excused.

Still, when at length they settled down at home, and the conversation flagged, and they waited for Him to speak, what was their surprise when, with irony in both word and manner, He suddenly asked them:

'What did you treat of in the way?'

They were taken aback. Did He know? Had He overheard them after all? Had they the courage to tell Him? For somehow, though before in their moment of excitement they had not adverted to it, now when He spoke they realized that what they had done was something of which they had cause to be ashamed. At first they were silent; none cared to speak, not even Simon. Presently one among them saw an escape from the dilemma. It was true they had been discussing their respective claims to promotion; but with Him they might leave that alone, and speak of promotion in general. Substantially that would be the truth, or at least enough of it to suffice for the moment. What had they been treating of in the way? They had been asking each other a question; and since He wished to know they would put the same to Him.

'Who thinkest thou
Is the greater in the kingdom of heaven?'

How little, then, after all these months of teaching, did these men know their Master! How little had they learnt of the things that really concerned them and their mission! Scenes such as this, more than any other, reveal to us the untiring endurance and patience of Him who had to train them; none more eloquently disclose the weak things of this world that were chosen by Him ultimately to confound the strong. Jesus was not contemptuous of their vanity. He was not angry with their manifest deception. He but seized the occasion to give them one of the deepest lessons in all his training of them. He read their hearts. In a formal manner He sat down among them, and called the Twelve about Him. When He had sat down, as if enunciating a text for a discourse, He said:

'If any man desire to be first
He shall be the last of all
And the minister of all.'

In the room as He spoke there were others beside the Twelve; among them some women and their children, silently looking on beside the door. Jesus pointed to one of these children; He beckoned to him to come near; the child came to Him unafraid; to children He was Jesus of Nazareth and no more. He took the child and drew him to His side; He turned him round to face the Twelve; even in presence of the Twelve the child had no fear, for the arm of Jesus was about him.

Then Jesus spoke, with solemnity, with an unwonted solemnity. This day He had much to say to the Twelve, and this was the beginning; things fundamental, the learning of which would put into practice the Sermon on the Mount as it had never been before. Again they might not yet understand, but the day would come when they would. It was a lesson which, more than any other, posterity would repeat, and repeat to the end of time, as the one characteristic of the Christian ideal.

'And calling unto him a little child
He set him by him
In the midst of them
Whom when he had embraced
He saith to them
Amen I say to you

Unless you be converted
And become as little children
You shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven
Whosoever therefore shall humble himself
As this little child
He is the greater in the kingdom of heaven
And he that shall receive one such child as this
In my name
Receiveth me
And whosoever shall receive me
Receiveth not me
But him that sent me
For he that is the lesser among you all
He is the greater.'

As usual, the words made little impression on those who heard them at the time. They were accustomed to parables; no doubt the child was a parable; as to being children again He could not mean what He seemed to say. And as for the greater in the Kingdom, kingdoms were made by men not by children; therefore He must mean something else. Again it was very well to welcome children, but children were not the same as Jesus Himself, and to nourish a child could not be the same as following and preaching Him. They made no attempt to understand; they would leave it to Him to explain Himself later; meanwhile they had other, more important matters to discuss.

John in particular was of this mind. If we may judge from other events in his career, he had taken a chief part in the discussion that had been held along the road. This Son of Thunder was a youth of strong opinions, and was strong in his expressions of them; to his last day the fire within him, and the grand ideals he ever had before him, made him never hesitate, at need, to pronounce anathema. The 'disciple whom Jesus loved' had his shortcomings, the faults corresponding to his natural virtues. More devoted than others, he had the less patience with those who had no devotion; more far-seeing, he could not endure those who would not see; more naturally loving, united with all whom he loved and therefore loved by them in turn, he was easily roused to indignation against those who were untrue. Spontaneous, but tending to intolerance; effusive, and therefore leaping to conclusions; enthusiastic, with reactions to despair because of failure; affectionate, and on that account destined to learn, more than the others, the lesson they were that day being taught, even though at the moment he had little of it.

Now recently John and some companions had had an experience which had much confused them. They had been separated from the rest, probably on some errand; they had been passing down a country lane and there, to their astonishment, they had come across a man who was posing as one of themselves. He was actually professing to cast out devils, and apparently was succeeding. He was doing it in the name of Jesus, though it was clear that he had no commission so to do. This had seemed to them quite out of order. He was interfering with their rights. They had questioned him concerning his authority, and he had been able to give no answer. Evidently he was a believer; nevertheless for such assumption of power that was not enough. John and his companions had exercised their jurisdiction; they had forbidden him to go on with this conduct, this preaching and casting out of devils without permission; and knowing John from other places we may be sure that in doing so he gave vent not a little to his righteous indignation.

Since their reunion in Capharnaum this affair had been uppermost in the mind of John, and he had determined on the first opportunity to bring it to the notice of the Master. The present opportunity would serve. The topic on which they were engaged was not agreeable; the Twelve had been detected doing that which they should not do, and would be grateful if someone intervened. At an interval, when Jesus had paused, John thought to change the subject. In his impetuous way, not too unlike that of his friend Simon Peter,

'John answering said
Master
We saw a man
Casting out devils in thy name
And we forbade him
Because he followeth not with us.'

Jesus listened to the indignant protest of the youthful disciple whom He loved. He was over-enthusiastic, but he was sound at heart; he had much yet to learn, but none were more quick to take lessons than he and Philip. He would correct him; this lesson at least he would probably take to heart:

‘ And Jesus said to him
Do not forbid him
For there is no man that doth a miracle
In my name
And can speak soon ill of me
For he that is not against you
Is for you
For whosoever shall give you to drink a cup of water
In my name
Because you belong to Christ
Amen I say to you
He shall not lose his reward.’

John had received his answer, and in this beautiful way; in the way that most appealed to the best part of himself. He had never before connected the two ideas together; that to do anything in the name of Jesus was in itself a bond of union. The day would come when the very pagans and unbelievers would through this name be drawn into union with them, and in this very way of charity.

But Jesus had more yet to say. John had interrupted Him, and He had patiently given him his answer. Now He would go back to what He had been saying before. The little child stood still by Him, leaning on His breast, the arm of Jesus still round him; Jesus had more to say about that child. He had already set him up as a model for the Twelve to imitate; now He championed the cause of the child, of all His children whether old or young, placing in their well-being the well-being of His Church, of all the world, of every man and woman in it, in their injury the doom of each and all.

It would seem that at this point S. Matthew has again followed his usual custom, of gathering together the instructions of Jesus at a point which has appeared to him most fitting. Evidently to him that last meeting in Capharnaum was one of moment. It was a landmark in the training of the Twelve, when they were checked in their first grandiose ambitions, and shown the true goal at which they were to aim. His Church was not to be counted just by numbers; rather was it to be estimated by the purity, the perfection, the safeguarding of its individual members. To emphasize this the Evangelist does not hesitate to repeat himself; thus he links up these instructions with the Sermon on the Mount, making them an appendix for the guidance of those who were in their turn to teach the contents of that Sermon. We can only give them as they stand; they need no comment.

Jesus went on:

'And whosoever shall scandalize one of these little ones who believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of scandals! for it must needs be that scandals should come, but nevertheless woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh! And if thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable everlasting fire, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished. And if thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter lame into everlasting life, than having two feet to be cast into the hell of unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished. And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is better for thee having one eye to enter into life, into the kingdom of God, than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished. For everyone shall be salted with fire, and every victim shall be salted with salt. Salt is good; but if the salt become unsavoury, wherewith will you savour it? Have salt in you, and have peace among you.

'See that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say to you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost. What think you? If a man hath a hundred sheep, and one of them should go astray, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains and go after the one that is gone astray? And if it so be that he find it, amen I say to you, he rejoiceth more for that than for the ninety-nine who went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

'And if thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between him and thee alone ; if he shall hear thee thou shalt gain thy brother. And if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more ; that in the mouth of one or two witnesses every word may stand. And if he will not hear them, tell the church ; and if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican. Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven ; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven.

'Again I say to you that if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'

At this point Simon Peter interrupted.

'Then came Peter unto him and said
Lord
How often shall my brother offend against me
And I forgive him
Till seven times ?'

It was a natural interruption. One lesson Peter had already learnt ; His Master was, above all things else, a patient and forgiving Master. Therefore, should the day ever come when he was to succeed Him, he must be the same. But to what extent ? Surely there must be a limit. In the Old Law there was laid down the injunction of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth '. In the tremendous Sermon on the mountain-side Jesus had transcended all that. There more than once He had taught forgiveness ; forgiveness of injuries done to us, forgiveness of enemies, forgiveness as we would be forgiven ; forgiveness as a condition of entrance into the Kingdom, forgiveness before one ventured to kneel down to pray, forgiveness as a characteristic feature of His followers ; forgiveness as a part of justice itself, forgiveness as an element of prayer, forgiveness as means of likeness to God the Father. Many a time since then, by word and by deed, He had emphasized the teaching.

This characteristic of Jesus there was no escaping. It stood out prominent, one might say peculiar, not only in Himself, but as against all the accepted principles of the very civilization about Him. As He taught it, as He practised it, it was something entirely new, something even contradictory. It was a defiance of what men meant by justice; it was a lowering of oneself; it offended against man's sense of self-respect. For justice demanded retribution, yet would He forgive; human right demanded vindication, yet would He forgive; self-respect could not be put to shame, yet would Jesus unconditionally forgive.

But surely there was a limit? Peter had long pondered on this problem, and he had wondered where that limit should be placed. His Master had showed none. Never once, in regard to Himself at least, had He retaliated; of late He had even begun to talk of enduring unto death. Where would He stop? That Peter should wish to know was not unnatural.

Jesus had His answer for Peter, 'full measure, pressed down, and flowing over'. This was another characteristic that Peter knew well; not in forgiveness only but in everything. He gave, He gave in extravagant abundance, there was no limit to His giving; so lavishly did the torrent pour that He seemed to despise the things He gave as of no moment; so infinite was the store from which they came.

'Jesus saith to him: I say not to thee till seven times, but till seventy times seven times. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a king who would take an account of his servants; and when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents. And as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. But that servant falling down besought him saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him the debt. But when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow-servants that owed him a hundred pence, and laying hold of him he throttled him, saying: Pay what thou owest. And his fellow-servant falling down besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he paid the debt. Now his fellow-servants, seeing what was done, were very much grieved, and they came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him and said to him: Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt because thou besoughtest me; shouldst not thou then have had compassion on thy fellow-servant also, even as

I had compassion on thee? And his lord being angry delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall my heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not everyone his brother from your hearts.'

On this note ends this instruction of Jesus to the Twelve, concerning the principles of government as He would have them use it. And indeed on this note may be said to end the main portion of His public life, the mission in and around Galilee. From this moment all will be different. The shadow of the Cross now definitely takes shape and spreads over Him; having laid His foundations, by deed and by word, by appointment of successors and by constitutions for their guidance, He now prepares Himself to face the end. Never does the independent strength of Jesus appear more manifest than now, yet never is He more merciful and yielding; we shall see these two characteristics conspicuous in all that follows. It is again an instance of that paradox which already we have so often seen.

The parable with which this discourse has concluded deserves special notice. It is delivered to the Twelve; it is transparently clear, needing not a word of interpretation; full as it is of the infinite forgiveness of God the Father, it ends nevertheless with a threat. In its imagery it is magnificent. It deals with kings and kingdoms, not, as hitherto, with the humble surroundings of their ordinary life. It deals with moneys to a bewildering amount, millions of pounds as we nowadays would reckon it, the debt of a whole nation to another in those times, reaching far beyond the grasp of the fishermen who listened to Him. A servant who could owe so great a sum must himself have been a man of no small importance. Then, in equally grand style, there is the withering condemnation, suited to the mouth of the Asiatic monarch, followed by the no less sweeping act of clemency; the man who could so easily condone so much was a man of untold riches. It is a picture, without a single needless word, that must have appealed to and overwhelmed their Asiatic minds.

Then the contrast, from a debt of millions to a debt of a few pence, such as was well within the experience of these fishermen; such a debt as, to one who dealt in millions, could have counted for absolutely nothing. And that debt this man of millions demanded; a debt which his very self-respect ought to have taught him to ignore; men such as he should hardly remember such trifles. Not only did he demand it; to secure it he behaved like any common ruffian. He met his debtor in the street, a 'fellow-servant', his equal in rank. He seized him by the throat, he had him put in gaol; in his blustering way, if he had no money, he would show that he still had power.

The lesson needed no application. So much do we owe the Father; so little does any man owe us. It is an advance on anything He has said before, much though that has been. Before He said:

'Forgive as you would be forgiven';

now He says that we have been forgiven, and that to such an amount that not all the debts due to us from men, though brought together and multiplied seventy times seven times, could ever come near to that which we have owed. So towering, even in its smallest details, is the eloquence of Jesus Christ.

70. The Feast of Tabernacles

Thus the year had dragged on till the month of October. Now the Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. It was a feast that served a double purpose; it commemorated the journey of the Hebrews through the desert and it was a kind of harvest festival. We read in Leviticus:

'And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Say to the children of Israel: From the fifteenth day of this same seventh month shall be kept the feast of tabernacles seven days to the Lord. The first day shall be called most solemn and most holy; you shall do no servile work therein. And seven days you shall offer holocausts to the Lord. The eighth day also shall be most solemn and most holy, and you shall offer holocausts to the Lord. For it is the day of assembly and congregation. You shall do no servile work therein.

. . . . . .

'So from the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you shall have gathered in all the fruits of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the Lord seven days. On the first day and the eighth shall be the Sabbath, that is a day of rest. And you shall take to you on the first day the fruits of the fairest tree, and branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God. And you shall keep the solemnity thereof seven days in the year; it shall be an everlasting ordinance in your generations. In the seventh month shall you celebrate this feast, and you shall dwell in bowers seven days. Everyone that is of the race of Israel shall dwell in tabernacles, that your posterity may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in tabernacles when I brought them out of the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God' (Leviticus xxiii, 33–43).

It was a feast of thanksgiving, in part a merry-making feast, frequented, as might have been supposed, by the people from the country places; the Galilæans made much of it. When then the season came round this year, the usual preparations began; pilgrims were gathered, and tents and 'tabernacles' were got together. Would Jesus go with them? He had missed the Pasch of that year; ever since He had kept away from Judæa. But why? Surely He was making a mistake. He had been working miracles; that, no one who had seen them could deny. He had announced a kingdom, and there was every reason to suppose that He intended to be its first King. On the other hand He confined Himself to Galilee, and Galilee was the very last place in which one could hope that a kingdom might be founded. If He wished to have the influence He sought He must go to the centre of life, to Judæa, to Jerusalem. He must preach there, and He must work His wonders there, as He had preached and worked wonders so lavishly in Galilee. If He did not, how could He possibly be known? If He did not, what Judæan would follow Him on the evidence of mere Galilæans? Was there not danger of jealousy, and therefore opposition, between the people of the two provinces? There was surely one thing to be done; pressure must be brought to bear upon Him to induce Him to leave His seclusion and appear before the great world.

It was His 'brethren', whoever these were, who argued in this wise; His companions from His very childhood, and the companions of Mary His Mother; men from Nazareth, who possibly had made some progress since the days when they had been scandalized by His assumptions and had joined in His rejection, but men too familiar with Him to believe that He could be more than man. They knew Him too well for that; whatever others less intimate with Him might think, they were not to be deluded into foolish ideas about His being in any special sense the Son of God. He might aim at being a king, that was within their understanding. If He failed, the consequences would fall upon His own head; if He succeeded, they might also be the gainers.

> ' Now the Jews' feast of Tabernacles was at hand
> And his brethren said to him
> Pass from hence
> And go into Judæa
> That thy disciples also may see thy works
> Which thou hast done
> For there is no man doth anything in secret
> And he himself seeketh to be known openly
> If thou do these things
> Manifest thyself to the world
> For neither did his brethren believe in him.'

Thus much, and little or no more, had Jesus gained from all the wonderful things He had taught and done in Galilee. A few months before it had all promised very differently. He could look back to the early days when He had begun by healing the demoniac at the door of the synagogue in Capharnaum, and by a single stroke had seemed to capture the whole town. He could dwell upon the deep affection that had grown up between the people and Himself, so that they could not leave Him alone. Wherever He had gone they had thronged Him; they had made Him one of themselves; they had brought to Him their sick for His blessing; they had hung upon His lips, catching His every word; for His sake they had ignored the criticizing Scribes and Pharisees; when He went afield they had begged of Him to stay, when He returned they had crowded down the road to welcome Him. They had hailed Him as one who spoke with authority; they had called Him ' a great Prophet ', nay more, ' The Prophet that was to come into the world '; last of all, and climax of all, they had wished to make Him their King.

And that was all; indeed, that was the sad issue. With all their devotion and enthusiasm, they had never been able to get rid of this false ideal, and it had vitiated all the rest. He had refused it, and they had been checked; He had blamed them for their mistake, and they had resented it. He had offered them another Kingdom, and they had only shaken their heads; another kind of King, another life, and they had turned their backs upon Him. Once this had been done, it had become no longer difficult to explain away His claim, and then His teaching, and next His miracles, and now finally Himself. A man who made such mistakes could not be more than man. Since He could not be more than man, the secret of His power, after all, might be that suggested by the Pharisees. But whether it were that or not, if He wished to win their support it must be on their conditions. Let Him prove His kingship in the only way they could understand, and then, perhaps, they would follow Him.

The heart of Jesus read them through, and knew that the gulf between them was only widening every day. They were blind to all His guidance; they would go their own way and He could not go with them. If He were to ascend to Jerusalem it must not be in their company; to do so would create a false impression, it would put Him in a false position. Some day He would march upon the city, but not with such an army as this. They should go up apart from Him, and He would go apart from them; single-handed He had conquered Galilee, single-handed He would fight His battle in Judæa. Besides there was the danger, nay, the doom which there in the end awaited Him. He would not have these men to share it; separated from Him they would incur no blame.

'Then Jesus said to them
My time is not yet come
But your time is always ready
The world cannot hate you
But me it hateth
Because I give testimony of it
That the works thereof are evil
Go you up to this festival day
But I go not up to this festival day
Because my time is not yet accomplished
When he had said these things
He himself stayed in Galilee
But after his brethren were gone up
Then he also went up to the feast
Not openly
But as it were in secret.'

The caravan left Galilee without Him, following the Jordan route, crossing at the ford now made famous by both John the Baptist and Jesus, up to Jerusalem by way of Jericho, and Bethania, and Olivet. On the slope of Olivet overlooking the city they pitched their tents and built their bowers. It was still the warm season but by no means unendurable. The country round was brown and bare, the crops had long been gathered ; there was abundance of open space, more than in the paschal season ; the pilgrims were more homogeneous, coming almost entirely from the country round about.

On their arrival in the city these travellers from Galilee discovered an interest about them far greater than they had expected. It was as they had said and more ; the excitement concerning Jesus of Nazareth was great ; they found His name discussed on every side. Scarcely had they settled down in their encampment than they were visited by men from the city who came in search of Him. Among them were convinced friends, and also no less convinced enemies ; but by far the greater part shrewdly owned themselves in doubt, refusing to be convinced one way or the other. With the first, it was not so much the tale of His miracles that won them ; it was the Man Himself. Malign Him and His words as they might, His enemies could not escape the fact of His towering, essential goodness. It was with Him as it had been with the Baptist. The latter did no miracles ; his personality alone had made the people of Judæa come to him. So was it now, and so would it be with Jesus in Judæa. Though He had spent the greater part of His time in Galilee, and though He perished in Jerusalem, still the best soil for His seed was in Judæa, and from Judæa in the end the best harvest would be reaped.

But for the present it was not ripe ; moreover among the wheat cockle had been sown. More than Galilee or any other province Judæa was steeped in politics. It was the seat of the Roman rule, alongside was the Jewish court and its more immediate influence. In and out of the Temple gate political factions seethed. In the town beyond, other monarchs, Herod, and Philip, and the rest, had their city palaces ; when these men with their retinues came into the place there was always possibility of trouble. For all these reasons and more Jerusalem always needed a strong police to keep it in order, as the Roman Governor knew only too well. In consequence of this there was an eminently respectable portion of the community that looked upon obedience to the Law as the first essential of all life, the chief virtue of a man. To cause disturbance was the greatest of offences ; death for it in their eyes was not too hard a punishment. Such men, and there were many, could have only one opinion concerning Jesus. Good man or not, eminent preacher or not, worker of miracles or not, prophet or not, even Messias as He called Himself or not, He was a disturber of the peace. He was a mischief-maker, a nuisance ; He drew the common people after Him, Galilæans in particular, and even at the best of times Galilæans were annoying. Moreover there were reports of His encouraging among them silly dreams of a new Kingdom and a new King. He could not therefore be an influence for good among them.

Such was the talk, in the bazaar and elsewhere, which the Galilæans heard when they came up to the city for the Feast of Tabernacles. But it was talk that circulated only among their own sort ; in high places nothing at all was being said. The Roman authorities knew nothing of Jesus of Nazareth ; they were above religious wranglings, and took cognizance only of dangerous fanatics. The Jewish authorities knew more, but their policy was one of strict silence ; should Jesus ever show Himself again in the city, they had long since decided what they would do. And the people knew—it was carefully arranged that they should know—that to show too much interest in Jesus of Nazareth might bring them no good.

Nevertheless this very warning only served the more to stir their secret curiosity.

‘ The Jews therefore sought him on the festival day
And said, Where is he ?
And there was much murmuring among the multitude
concerning him
For some said
He is a good man
And others said
No, but he seduceth the people
Yet no man spoke openly of him
For fear of the Jews.’

In none of the Evangelists more than in S. Luke does it appear that at this point another climax has been reached in the life of Jesus, and that from this moment a complete change begins to take place. S. Luke, as it were, dates the cleavage, S. John tells us more of its nature ; but in both alike it is unmistakable. Says S. Luke :

'And it came to pass
When the days of his assumption were accomplished
That he steadfastly set his face
To go to Jerusalem.'

Each phrase in this statement is significant. Hitherto we have expressly heard from S. John that

'Jesus walked in Galilee
For he would not walk in Judæa
Because the Jews sought to kill him.'

Now a certain moment has come. 'The days of his assumption (ʼαναλήμψεως) are accomplished', the days of His being taken up. The time of His preaching in Galilee and its surroundings has ended ; the time for the last battle, closing with death, and resurrection, and being taken up into heaven has begun. Very definitely the Evangelist marks it ; very definitely he shows henceforward the complete change of attitude of which we have just spoken. Now Jesus turned His face towards Jerusalem. He knew what lay before Him ; humanly He shrank back from it ; but He would not turn aside or look elsewhere. In Jerusalem He knew He must face not only unbelief mingled with contempt such as He had met with in Galilee, but unbelief ending in hatred. From the moment He set foot in the Holy City it would be a battle for very life.

He allowed the caravan containing the brethren to go on its way to the Feast of Tabernacles ; He Himself remained in or near Capharnaum, with at least some of the Twelve. The reason for His staying He stated very clearly ; it was the hatred of the city world, and the consequent danger that surrounded Him. When then a few days later He declared to His companions His decision to go, they received the announcement with mixed feelings. There was hope that at last He was about to found the Kingdom ; on the other hand there was fear. The enemy whose opposition had made them anxious in Capharnaum would make them far more anxious in Judæa. Still they could not disobey; they had themselves encouraged Him to go. When He fixed the route, not by the Jordan valley as the others had gone, but more directly through Samaria, they felt this going up to the festival was to be no ordinary visit.

One circumstance particularly struck them. More than once before they had been with Him through Samaria, on His way to and from Judæa. Once they had yielded so far as to stay with Him several days in the country, in a little town hard by the Samaritans' holy mountain, Garizim. But that had not been at a festival season; they had lingered there on their way from Judæa, not going towards it; both of these facts made a difference when dealing with fanatical Samaritans. Now it was quite otherwise. They were going up to Jerusalem, and obviously to the feast; their route took them beneath the shadow of Garizim; to choose this road at such a time seemed almost foolhardy.

And indeed the cold welcome they received justified their suspicions. From the Lake of Galilee to the northern boundary of Samaria would be a day's journey on foot; towards evening, as was His custom, He sent messengers ahead into the nearest town to make arrangements for the night. But though they were prepared for difficulty, the hostility with which they were received took them completely by surprise. The town was naturally on the main road; here the inhabitants were more sensitive to rivalries than in the more remote country places. It was the festival season, the festival when men lived in tents out of doors, and were inclined to be boisterous. They sang their devotion to Mount Garizim, and to the land of Joseph at its foot; they boasted their priority to their contemned rival, Jerusalem; when then a group of Jews appeared from Galilee, making their way to Judæa, on such an occasion it was looked upon as little else than a challenge. They were refused a lodging. In vain the messengers represented that they were followers of Jesus of Nazareth, whose name was well known on the frontier. Jesus of Nazareth or not, they were on their way to Jerusalem for the festival, and that was an insult to Samaritans. In their town they should not stay.

The messengers returned down the road not a little crestfallen and anxious. It was not often that they had been treated thus, not even in Samaria; and if this was done on the outskirts, what might not be expected when they came nearer to Garizim? It was true there would be friends there; the men of Sychar would not have forgotten Him; yet even they, at such a time as this, might easily become fanatical. Had He but taken the other and ordinary route all this would have been avoided. Since He had intended to go up to the feast, why had He not gone with the rest?

However, whatever their resentments, the sum of it all was that they had not succeeded in finding a lodging for the night. They came to Jesus and the others; they reported their misadventure and awaited further orders. It would seem that, as usual when matters went amiss, Jesus was little affected by the news, He seemed almost to expect it. Not so the rest of the band; they were troubled for the Master's sake, more than for their own. Of late He had shown signs of weariness; He had become more silent, more stern. Evidently He had been much affected by the failure of the people of Galilee; the constant nagging of the Pharisees and Scribes had tried Him. He had worn Himself out by constant journeyings with apparently little result; if anyone was in need of rest it was the Master.

But apart from that, to treat Him in this way was intolerable. Even His enemies had so far done no such thing, and He had shown the Samaritans already that, unlike other Jews, He would not consider them His enemies. It was true He had once been shamefully handled in Nazareth. But that was in the early days, before yet the Twelve had been gathered about Him; now that He was better known there were signs that even Nazareth had become more sober-minded. On the other hand the Pharisees themselves thought Him to be of sufficient importance, only Jesus of Nazareth though He was, to be given at least occasional hospitality. Over at Magdala, for instance, the centre of caste exclusiveness, He had sat down with them at their table. After such recognition, that He and they should be flouted by outcast Samaritans was intolerable, something must surely be done.

Among those who listened to the words of the messengers were the two brothers James and John; who had already been called by Jesus the Sons of Thunder. They were youths born to lead; they had no experience; they believed in short cuts to glory. They could not endure opposition. They were intolerant of any who would not agree with themselves. Moreover from their very character they had an enthusiasm of their own for Jesus. John was one of the first who discovered Him; at Cana, on the occasion of the marriage feast, he had boldly professed his belief and so encouraged the others. Together at the Master's bidding they had left their father at Bethsaida, and had never once looked back. During their journeys they had always been zealous for His honour; once they had presumed to silence a man who preached without His authority. When discussion turned on the Kingdom to come, and the rank to be held in that Kingdom, the voices of James and John were always to be heard.

That two such enthusiasts should take this rebuff of the Samaritans meekly was scarcely to be expected. It was unendurable; it must be punished; an example must be made of such offenders; once for all these people must be taught to respect the person of the coming King of Israel. Elias of old, over there on Carmel, had called down fire from heaven which had consumed the insulting pagan priests. Jesus was much more than Elias, therefore His honour should be no less vindicated. Of course He could not be expected to do this for Himself; Himself He never would defend. Instinctively they knew that to appeal to Him that He should take vengeance on His own behalf would be useless. But they could do it for Him; if He would give them the permission they would take it upon themselves.

'And when his disciples James and John
Had seen this they said
Lord
Wilt thou that we command
Fire to come down from heaven
And consume them?'

Poor James and John! With all their devotion they had much yet to learn. To the end of their lives, it might be, this tendency to over-indignation would be with them, even though the spirit beneath it would be tempered. Already they had begun to learn the meaning of true love, its vehemence but also its understanding gentleness; in time they would discover its wide ocean, spreading out from Him to all the world. Sinners were not made to be condemned, they were made to be saved from themselves; above all sinners who, however great their crime, did what they did because they knew no better. Jesus would not be hard on these enthusiastic brethren, for they meant well ; but they must be taught betimes that not by fire and sword was the Kingdom to be established.

'And turning he rebuked them saying
You know not of what spirit you are
The Son of Man came
Not to destroy souls
But to save.'

The words were a warning, not only for this occasion, but for all the weary months that were to follow, and indeed for the rest of their lives. That little scene on the border of Samaria was a shadow of the lot that was to befall Him for the remainder of His days. He would have them prepare for it. Already He had foretold it to them, but they had failed to understand. At least He would have them enter on the battle with this mind ; punishment must be left to God. And thus far they did understand ; they must yield rather than take vengeance. Off the beaten track were other villages where the citizens were less bigoted, they could turn aside to one of these. The Evangelist concludes the story with the simple remark :

'And he went into another town.'

CHAPTER XXIII

71. The New Disciples

IN the course of this journey through Galilee, and Samaria, and Judæa, it would seem that not a few came to Him individually, plucking up their courage and deciding to devote themselves to His cause. For a vocation is a personal, an individual affair. A man meets Jesus and is struck. He sees His truth, His genuineness, His greatness, His power, His lovableness, His attraction. He sees what others do not seem to see, and do what he will, if he is true to himself, he cannot resist the higher vision. Apart from the Twelve, and those others more definitely called whom we have already studied, there were many more whom the vision captured. It put men and women somewhat askew with their surroundings ; it made them somewhat unhappy with themselves. If they struggled, if they tried to live down the impression, only by deliberate refusal to be led could they destroy the fascination ; if they succeeded in destroying it, then they knew that they had thrown away and lost a treasure of great price. We see instances in Nicodemus the Pharisee, in the woman by Jacob's well, in the ruler of Capharnaum, in the woman of Magdala who was a sinner, in the woman who was healed by the touch of His garment, in the woman of Chanaan. In every case there was a vision not given to others, drawing the one who saw out of his or her surroundings, making it impossible with a peaceful heart ever to be the same again.

Examples of this now began to multiply. Among the groups that stood by and looked on, even as we have seen among the Pharisees and Scribes themselves, were men who realized more deeply than did their companions. The popular cry, whether for Him or against Him, to them went for nothing. They were convinced by the obvious truth and sincerity that surrounded Him ; they knew that to adhere to Him was the only course for an honest man.

Of such some would come and of their own accord would offer Him their allegiance; others, like Philip of old, needed a word of encouragement. Yet for all alike, when the call came, there would be the same temptation; there was the wrench from their surroundings, the seemingly reasonable appeal for delay until other matters in their lives were settled.

Long ago, when He was but a boy, and had left, and then answered His mother, Jesus had shown what He made of such appeals. More recently at Capharnaum He had spoken very clearly, when He called His Twelve His brethren and mother. He had spoken most strongly but a few days or weeks ago, when He had laid down conditions for any who proposed to come after Him. Now as it chanced,—it may have been in Galilee, more probably in Judæa, after they had passed through Samaria,—a man, a Scribe, came before Him. He had been impressed, in the manner we have seen. Independently, in his secret heart, he had gone his own way, apart from the way of his fellow-Scribes. He had reached a conclusion of his own; in the strength of that conclusion, now that Jesus had again crossed his path, he made up his mind and acted.

'And it came to pass
As they walked in the way
That a certain scribe came to him and said
Lord Master
I will follow thee
Whithersoever thou goest.'

It was a striking conversion. The Twelve were stirred; very different was this from the way He had been received a day or two before in Samaria. This was indeed a ray of hope. A Scribe, and that on the way to Jerusalem! Surely the Master would welcome such a convert, would receive him with open arms, would promote him at once, if only for his learning, to some post of honour in the Kingdom. And yet it was not so. Jesus did not reject him, far from it; but neither did He give him so much as that encouragement which at the first He had given to themselves. Rather He seemed cold; at least He was stern. Such a man must not be under any delusion; he must not have any false notions of the Kingdom. He must be given the hard truth; he must be told how complete was the surrender ; if in spite of that he still would follow then all would be well.

‘Jesus said to him
The foxes have holes
And the birds of the air their nests
But the Son of Man
Hath not where to lay his head.’

What was the issue of that vocation ? We are not told. Likely enough, as it had been with Nicodemus, he slipped back into his old surroundings, but none the less remained a believer. Not all the Pharisees, not all the Scribes, were enemies ; we shall yet have evidence of more who believed, and confessed their belief in their own way.

This event recalls to the notice of the Evangelist two others of a like kind. There were more than the Twelve who had been called by Jesus to follow Him, more than Levi the publican had been personally invited. On one occasion, for example, He had looked at a disciple and had said to him, as He had said to Philip, as He had said to Levi :

‘ Follow me.’

The man had not refused ; indeed he had been glad to be chosen. He would follow ; but first he had a duty at home.

‘ Lord ’, he had said
‘ Suffer me first to go
And to bury my dead.’

The answer again was stern ; but also it was an encouragement.

‘ And Jesus said to him
Let the dead bury their dead
But go thou
And preach the kingdom of God ’ ;

and from the tone of that command one might judge that the disciple was faithful to the call. There was another case more doubtful ; a man had come and had asked that he might join himself to the company. But not at once ; he would first bid farewell to his relatives ; he must not give offence. So he had asked :

'Lord
I will follow thee
But let me first take my leave
Of them that are at my house.'

To this man the answer had been yet more stern; it would seem almost a rejection. Jesus had looked at him and said:

'No man putting his hand to the plough
And looking back
Is fit for the kingdom of God.'

We listen to the words and ponder. But above all things let them be interpreted by the actions of Jesus Himself; and in that light we learn beyond a doubt that it is their spirit not the letter that quickeneth.

72. At the Feast of Tabernacles

Jesus came to Jerusalem towards the middle of the week of festival. He would have stayed outside the city, among Galilæan friends encamped on the slope of Olivet, over against the Temple wall. Very soon the news of His coming got abroad. The next day He crossed the Kedron valley and boldly went through the Golden Gate into the outer court of the Temple. The memory of the former occasions had not faded from the minds either of the people or of the priests and doctors; the reports of all that was being done in Galilee had kept that memory green. As we have already learnt, in the Holy City He was being discussed far more than in Galilee itself; for Jerusalem was the centre of the Jewish world, and these things were always a chief topic of conversation.

At once, therefore, on His appearing He was recognized and thronged. Enthusiastic friends proclaimed Him, suspicious enemies stood by and watched; doubting men who would yet believe followed and studied Him; curious crowds, who cared for Him no more than they cared for any novelty, gathered about hoping for some new excitement. Anxious Pharisees and priests held aloof, affecting contempt, trusting thereby to make others follow their example. He came, and multitudes of common people filled the court where He stood; and as had been His wont in the days of His apostolate in Galilee, so here, in the

Temple area, He had pity on these sheep that had no shepherd, and began to teach. He spoke as one having authority ; He spoke as the Lord of that Temple, asking leave from no one ; He spoke with definition, clearly, emphatically, and not with the doubtful hesitation of the Scribes. If twenty years ago, almost on that very spot, He had astonished His hearers by His wisdom and His answers, now when His hour of revelation had come He made them wonder more. He knew their Law as well as they. Though His interpretation was His own, and though it often swept aside the accepted teaching of the schools, still was it so transparent that it could not be gainsaid. With it all there was a certain emphasis, a certain directness, seen long ago in the Sermon on the Mount, more unbending still in the synagogue at Capharnaum, but now so firm that His very friends who had followed Him throughout were impressed and awed.

He was indeed the same Jesus, yet here in Jerusalem did He seem to be different. From time to time the old sympathy would break out, as if His very heart were weeping, and then He would speak with an affection that surpassed every former expression of the kind ; yet in His words there was also a sternness that checked all display of enthusiasm. He was no less practical ; to those who would accept Him He offered Himself as eagerly as before ; yet there was now an insistence that men should take Him wholly for what He was, with added threats and warning to those who would not. There was no parleying, no yielding. He no longer drew faith gently on, He compelled it. Here in the very heart of the enemy's citadel He seemed to have declared open war.

The people listened and were silent. They were impressed ; even the curious onlookers found themselves more powerfully affected than they had desired, more than was to their liking. But these men of the city were very different from those of the Galilæan villages and valleys ; less enthusiastic, more critical, less inclined to novelty, more content to profit by the present order, less inclined to dream ideals, more accustomed to ask questions. They had their own notions of credentials. If a man would teach he must himself have learnt ; for the teaching of the Law in particular there was a fund of learning needed, of the sayings of the rabbis of old, of an infinite ladder of tradition, of languages known only to a certain class. Enquiry showed that in none of these schools had Jesus been trained out of Nazareth; therefore it followed that however fascinating His doctrine, however convincing His conclusions, however obviously sincere and sure the Man Himself, what He taught must of necessity be suspect. It must be taken always with caution. It might not agree with the accepted teaching; it might be wrong.

> ' And the Jews wondered saying
> How doth this man know letters
> Having never learned ? '

S. John is at pains to let us see the utter change of attitude in Jesus when He is in Jerusalem from that which He regularly assumed in Galilee. In the latter province He dealt with those who knew no better, 'sheep having no shepherd', and He had compassion on them; even when in the end He was compelled to condemn them, it was with a note of sorrow for a loved one lost. In Jerusalem it was different. Here He could assume a greater knowledge; the difficulty with which He contended was not ignorance. Though prejudice and preconceived ideals, to which He did not correspond, were there, still it was not wholly these that hindered them. It was rather the fixed unwillingness to believe, the undermining of the Man, Jesus, Himself, the circumstantial arguments brought against Him, from anywhere, from nowhere, avoiding the points of which He spoke, the piling up of evidence on the other side, the assumption without proof that He was an enemy of Church and State, because He interfered with and disturbed the settled condition. However undeniable His miracles, however flawless and genuine the Man Himself, however many His good works, because He was only Jesus of Nazareth He could not be anything more. Because He had never studied in the schools, His doctrine could not be true. Because He had no other witness than Himself, He could not be trusted. Because His miracles were done in defiance of the Law, they were of no worth. Because He set Himself above Moses, He could not be made of any account. Last of all, because to accept Him was dangerous, He must be declared to be untrue.

Thus did men argue all around Him, in the Temple courts, in the streets of the Holy City. In the schools by the

Holy of Holies, where as a boy, twenty years before, He had won admiration by His youthful wisdom, the doctors discussed Him with their pupils and of course arrived at these conclusions. Their own personal hatred, their fear that this rival might conquer in the end, and oust them from their seats of honour, they hid beneath the cloak of their superficial prudence, of their affected condescension, their learning adapted to their purpose. And their pupils went out and taught to others that which they had learnt. Jesus was not to be trusted, He was not to be believed ; the only attitude a faithful Jew could adopt was to question everything He said or did. He might possibly do more ; so very doubtful was the benefit of His influence on the poor and ignorant and the easily led, that His death might even be advisable, a last convincing proof that He was a fraud.

Against hidden bitterness and hatred of this kind all about Him Jesus had now to contend. He accepted the challenge. We marvel at the unequal contest, at the opening of a campaign which from the first was doomed to failure. Now was manifest the significance of those temptations which, two years before, He had rejected in the desert down by Jericho. He who could turn water into wine, who could feed five thousand people with five loaves, could also if He liked turn stones into bread, could turn these stony hearts into that which would have satisfied His own hungry longing. But He would not. He whom angels came and served, could if He wished it ascend the pinnacle of the Temple and thence cast Himself down ; and the angels would have held Him up, and the people there looking and thwarting Him would have been compelled to bow down in adoration. But He would not. He who on the mountain had been transfigured, who by the Father had been proclaimed His beloved Son, who by devils had been acknowledged to be ‘ the Son of the Most High God ’, could if He wished it, there where He stood in the Temple court, on the steps of His own Father’s house, have commanded these His lawful subjects to give Him the allegiance that was His due. But He did not.

Instead, He stood among them as one of themselves, nay less than most of those about Him. Had He been a Judæan and not from contemned Galilee ; had He gone to the schools as became a future rabbi, and not been brought up as a carpenter ; had He been born a Pharisee, and not a miserable Son of a country-woman called Mary, He might have received a better welcome. He came, moreover, with no credentials. Had He been supported by Gamaliel, or any other of the learned scholars of the day, He might then have been heard with respect. But instead He preached Himself; He said He was His own witness; even John the Baptist was not so arrogant as this.

But that was not all. Even if He had determined to overcome the world as Man, still one might have thought—we His followers might have thought—that there was a certain dignity which He ought not to have lost, a certain self-respect which He ought to have preserved. These men in Jerusalem, as we have said, were not ignorant. They were insincere, they were determined not to learn, they wished only to accomplish His ruin. With such men there is only one tactic, and that is denunciation. With the ignorant we can be patient, forgiving even their insults; we may compassionate the well-intentioned, however grievous their offence; but with the malicious, the treacherous, the cunningly self-seeking, the unscrupulous, the deliberately false, there is only this alternative; either they must be crushed or we must leave them.

Yet with these men of Jerusalem Jesus did neither. He came amongst them and remained. He answered their questions as if they were sincere, He unravelled the knots in their own minds. Quietly He explained to them the mistakes they were making, the fallacies which led to their false conclusions. Affectionately He appealed to these hearts of stone, warmly He showed them His own heart's beauty as He had not shown it in His most generous moments in Galilee; now more than ever He permitted to appear the sadness of His disappointment. With them He was strong and He was weak; He was vehement to terror, and gentle as a child. He asserted and yet He condescended to explain; He demanded faith and yet He argued with the unbelieving; while He told them plainly that He knew they wished to take His life yet did He treat them no otherwise than as beloved friends.

It is needful to bear all this in mind if we would understand the events of the Feast of Tabernacles, and indeed all that followed after. On the one hand is the atmosphere, now full of storm, so different from that which has been felt elsewhere; on the other hand is the complete change, in attitude, in address, in subject-matter, which comes over Jesus whenever He is in the Holy City. At first one might suppose that it is the manner of the Evangelist S. John that produces this effect. To some extent it may be, but not wholly; beneath the Apostle's characteristic traits the marked distinction is still clear. It is seen in the other Evangelists, even though they have left more alone this wearisome, humiliating episode. Never was Jesus more conspicuously Master than when He fought to the death in Jerusalem, yet never was He more conspicuously meek and humble.

See Him, then, on this first day. He has come into the Temple, the crowd has gathered round Him, and He has taught. He has been listened to, and men have been awed. Then the suggestion has been whispered round: Can He be genuine? Can such a Man be trusted?

‘How can this man know letters
Having never learned?’

Whence has He got this knowledge? And He answers them; with that wonderful leap into the infinite and eternal He gives them His credentials; at the same time He lets them understand that, if they will, they can see even as He sees. How? By a very simple process. Let them but do the will of God; let them only think in harmony with God, and they will see as He sees. Then they will see, better than all the rabbis and all the schools can teach them, who is He who speaks to them. Yes, they are right; how He humours them! A man who merely proclaims himself is a doubtful witness, but He is not of that kind.

‘Jesus answered them and said
My doctrine is not mine
But his that sent me
If any man will do the will of him
He shall know of the doctrine
Whether it be of God
Or whether I speak of myself
He that speaketh of himself
Speaketh his own glory
But he that speaketh
The glory of him that sent him
He is true
And there is no injustice in him.’

Then comes the complaint. He is compelled to tell them where they fail; He is compelled, too, to let them know that though He is there trustfully among them He is not deceived.

'Did not Moses give you the law?
Yet none of you keepeth the law
Why seek you to kill me?'

Seek to kill Him? This was a serious charge to bring against them here in the open courtyard of the Temple. They had done nothing of the kind; He was free, for all they cared, to come in and go out as He pleased. One who so openly maligned them could not be Himself of much account. It was rumoured that the Pharisees had said He was possessed; language such as this made the rumour seem suspiciously correct.

'The multitude answered and said
Thou hast a devil
Who seeketh to kill thee?'

And yet in their heart of hearts they knew that what He said was only too true. Whatever individuals in that crowd may have thought, on whichever side they were ranged, it was common knowledge that the last time He was in the Holy City His life had been in danger. Deliberate schemes had then been hatched to do away with Him. He had been compelled to leave the place. Since that time the news that had come up from Galilee had only exasperated His enemies the more. They had joined together, Pharisees with Sadducees, these with hated Herodians and others, to see whether at a safe distance He could not be put out of the way. Such a course would cause less disturbance; it had been happily contrived in the case of John the Baptist, it would be well if with Jesus they could have the same success. No; the multitude could not be ignorant that His complaint was true; but on that very account they protested all the more.

Jesus ignored their protests; bickering of that kind was beneath Him. If their memories needed to be revived He would quickly revive them. He would remind them of His last visit; of the miracle He then had worked; of the effect it had made upon them; of the accusation that had been trumped up because of it against Him; of the persistent repetition of that charge, as if it were the last word to be said. He would show them that the same accusation could be brought against Moses himself. Moses broke the Sabbath for less cause than He; on the Sabbath He did a greater good deed than Moses. What was the Law? Was it greater than true justice? He concluded with another instance of that biting irony which He possessed in a manner unique in all the world.

'Jesus answered and said
One work I have done
And you all wonder
Therefore Moses gave you circumcision
Not because it is of Moses
But of the fathers
And on the sabbath day
You circumcise a man
If a man receive circumcision
On the sabbath day
That the law of Moses may not be broken
Are you angry at me
Because I have healed the whole man
On the sabbath day?
Judge not according to the appearance
But judge just judgement.'

The crowd dispersed and went away with the cry: 'Why seek you to kill me?' still ringing in its ears. After all, reflected many, resent it as they might, what He said was in spirit true. They might say it was no concern of theirs, that to take life was not in their power, that it was the affair of the authorities alone; nevertheless it went deep into their hearts that He knew of the plots laid against Him, and yet dared to behave as He did in the very Temple precincts. But if it was true, then naturally their thoughts took another turn. If His death had long since been decided on, then why did the authorities not proceed against Him? He was there again within their reach, standing defiant at their very door, not in the least subdued, nay, more defiant than ever; then why was He not silenced? Did the priests doubt whether this Man was He or not? That was not possible. Had they then begun to suspect that indeed He was all He claimed to be? Had they become afraid to touch Him lest He might strike them in

His wrath? That was more possible. Yet could even that be the explanation? If it were, then it could only be because they did not know who in fact this Jesus of Nazareth was and whence He came. But they themselves knew; they knew all about Him; ignorant people always know everything. And the fact that they knew was itself a proof in their minds that Jesus could not be the Christ. At times the irony of S. John's account is so biting that it runs near to withering scorn.

'Some therefore of Jerusalem said
Is not this he
Whom they seek to kill?
And behold he speaketh openly
And they say nothing to him
Have the rulers known for a truth
That this is the Christ?
But we know this man
Whence he is
But when the Christ cometh
No man knoweth whence he is.'

Thus once more was His Nazarene origin brought up against Him as positive proof that He could not be the Christ. But here it was brought by the common people, by the men in the bazaar who could look upon Him only as one of their own caste; and caste in the East is an iron bond not to be broken. But those in higher places had other thoughts, other grounds of accusation; not so much because He was Jesus of Nazareth, but because of His claim to be King of the Jews, they would have none of Him.

Jesus knew well what the people in the streets were saying concerning Him. They were being pulled both ways; even the indifferent were being compelled to take sides. The instinctive bias of the city, pressed by the powers seated on the chair of Moses, was against Him. For the time being He left the powers alone; their hour would come later. He would appeal straight to the multitudes; not that He hoped to convince them, but at least they should learn from His mouth the mistake in their conclusions. They said they knew Him. Yes, so far as He was Jesus of Nazareth they did; but so far as He was more they did not, and until He showed them they could not. They said they knew whence He was. So far as He came only from

Galilee they did ; but so far as He came from God they did not, and without His aid it was impossible they should. Did not their own comment prove this ? The Christ when He came would indeed come as Man, but on their own confession there would be much about Him which they would not know.

He came again into the Temple court, again the multitudes came round. He caught up their words, took the very thoughts in their minds which they had not expressed, went behind these thoughts into their hearts, appealed to their acceptance of God Himself, and to their belief in the revelation which He had promised them, fell back upon their own declaration that the Christ would not be known whence He was, and by supplying this knowledge gave them the proof they needed. He took them on their own ground ; He supplied the argument they asked for. Men of goodwill, resting on His transparent truthfulness, would accept His proof ; men of evil will would see in it no more than a retort, at most a rebuke, and would hate Him the more. He was dividing the camps ; deliberately He was compelling men to be for Him or against Him. It was very different now from the early days in Galilee ; then He had come 'for the lost sheep', now it was clear He had come for the fall as well as for the resurrection of many in Israel.

'Jesus therefore cried out in the Temple
Teaching and saying
You both know me
And you know whence I am
And I am not come of myself
But he that sent me is true
Whom you know not
I know him
Because I am from him
And he hath sent me.'

The effect of His words was immediate. They admitted of no answer ; they must either be believed or not, and if not, then what He said was blasphemy. On this very spot He had been accused of blasphemy before, and that had been made the ground for demanding His life ; now a portion of the mob could justify themselves in following the lead of their masters. He was a blasphemer ; He deserved a blasphemer's fate ; when the blood of an

Asiatic crowd is stirred it takes the law into its own hands. There was a cry that He should be apprehended ; the Pharisees and Scribes would be only too willing to give them their support. There was a rush to take Him, while timid believers stood aside and yielded. Yet when they drew near, when no one now stood between Him and them, there was a something that held them ; they could not lay a single finger on Him. He would lay down His life when He chose, but then He did not choose ; and until that moment came no man should touch Him.

'They sought therefore to apprehend him
And no man laid hands on him
Because his hour was not yet come.'

The disturbance of that day did but intensify the talk in the city concerning Him. His enemies were the more embittered, those inclined to Him were the more encouraged ; the fact that, in spite of the tumult, not a single Pharisee had thus far dared to touch Him made them the more confident. What He had said that day had driven the discussion a step further. First it had been said that He was too well known to be the Christ ; He had shown that He was less well known than was imagined. Now the question had arisen, could He be believed or not ? And the well disposed went back upon the months that He had been before the world since His first appearance by the Jordan. The evidence of those months was impressive. First there was the Man Himself, then His teaching, lastly the outpouring of Himself in miracles. These last had been enough to confirm many about Him in belief ; the report of them, their convincing evidence, now came home to the open-minded in Jerusalem.

'But of the people many believed in him
And said
When the Christ cometh
Shall he do more miracles
Than these which this man doth ?'

Let us remember that Jerusalem was a very small place, and talk went quickly through it as it goes to-day. In the East opinion changes very quickly ; a crowd that yesterday was biased to one side, to-morrow may be wholly on the other. Moreover there were many influences at work in the town. With all their fickleness, and their limitations in belief, the pilgrims from Galilee were prominent and vehement. They had come up to the festival full of the miracles their Jesus of Nazareth had worked ; they had tried to persuade Him to come with them that they might advertise Him to the people of Judæa. Now that He had appeared, and had made Himself the subject of so much discussion, it was not likely that these Galilæans would be silent. Their tales were listened to, their evidence was not to be denied ; insinuations followed about their religious leaders. Jesus being what He was, teaching as He did in the very Temple precincts, working miracles as undoubtedly He had done, why was He so ignored by the guardians of the faith of Israel ? Surely one way or another they were bound to act. Either they must accept Him as a teacher like themselves, or they must condemn Him. There was restiveness growing in the town.

The Pharisees had their informers, and very soon they learnt the temper that was rising. Their policy of aloofness had failed utterly ; Jesus had proved too great a matter of concern for His enemies as well as for His friends, and could no longer be ignored. They must alter their tactics ; something must be done to influence the people. They met together, the chief priests of the Temple and the Pharisees. It was agreed that they need not yet commit themselves in public ; they need not be demeaned by entering the arena in contest with this upstart. It would be enough to act through their police. They would send them down to keep order in the Temple, and therefore to arrest this Man as a disturber of the public peace. Taken on this ground He could not be honoured as a martyr ; He would be a common criminal, a breaker of the Law.

‘ The Pharisees heard the people
Murmuring these things concerning him
And the rulers and Pharisees
Sent ministers to apprehend him.’

It is impressive to notice the attitude with which Jesus met this change of front. The more nervous His enemies became, the more does His serenity appear ; the more they show their animosity, the more does He prove that He is stronger than they. He moves in and out of the city, in and out of the Temple gate, exactly when He pleases ;

when He sees occasion He addresses the people. His language is now on a higher plane. It consists no longer of the homely, practical discourses we have heard in Galilee, lit up with their everyday descriptions; rather it is filled with the deep things of faith, leading to mystical conclusions. For those who had ears to hear what He said they had full meaning; for those who had not there was always an escape. In these last days, as throughout His life, Jesus would force the faith of no one. He would have willing believers or none at all.

It is in this spirit that He meets the present situation. He is not troubled; He does not any longer avoid His would-be captors, as He had done before, and as He will do later. He treats them as children whose ways are wayward; they do not even annoy Him. They come to remove Him; He tells them they need have no anxiety on that point; soon He will remove Himself. Now they would be rid of Him; soon they will be sorry, and will wish to have Him back, and will not be able to find Him. He has told them quite plainly whence He has come; soon He will return to that same place and will leave them. During all the time He speaks He is the Master. The messengers sent to take Him are paralysed and can do nothing; they wish to do nothing; to silence such a tongue would be a crime.

'Jesus therefore said to them
Yet a little while I am with you
And then I go
To him that sent me
You shall seek me
And shall not find me
And where I am
Thither you cannot come.'

They were mysterious words; even to the more initiated they could only have a prophetic meaning which the future alone would explain. On this account they were stored up in their minds; on this account, on the night of the Last Supper, Jesus reminded them of them when He said:

'Little children
Yet a little while I am with you
You shall seek me

And as I said to the Jews
Whither I go
You cannot come
So I say to you now.'

But if to them they were a mystery, much less were they understood by the men standing around. They asked themselves what He meant. That the Messias was sent for the children of Israel they knew. But there were other children of Israel besides themselves; there were the children of the dispersion. Could He mean that He had grown tired of the Jews of Judæa, and would seek a happier fortune elsewhere? Could it be that this last manœuvre of the Pharisees had disgusted Him, and that He resented being hunted by the police? Could He mean that since His own people had treated Him so badly He would turn to the Gentile world? They were torn many ways. Many affected not to care; yet even they felt the shame to themselves should He be driven out. It was a strange thing He had said; what were they to make of it?

'The Jews therefore said among themselves
Whither will he go
That we shall not find him?
Will he go
Unto the dispersed among the Gentiles
And teach the Gentiles?
What is this saying that he has said
You shall seek me
And shall not find me?
And
Where I am you cannot come?'

Whatever their meaning it was evident the words had made a deep impression.

73. The Last Day of the Feast

In the midst of all this turmoil the festival at length came to an end. On the last day of all Jesus made a final appeal. This time there was more pathos in His words than there had been on any day before. The last day was the most solemn day of all. Crowds filled the Temple court; Jesus came into their midst and

'Stood and cried saying
If any man thirst
Let him come to me
And drink
He that believeth in me
As the Scripture saith
Out of his belly
Shall flow rivers of living water.'

It was an impressive moment. There by the altar before them the priest was pouring out the water mixed with wine, to commemorate the water in the desert which the Lord had made to flow for the Hebrews in their wanderings. The miracle had never been forgotten; it had formed almost a familiar way of speaking for all time. Jesus, as was His custom, took His imagery from the things around Him, and made use of words which called up endless memories. There was in particular His favourite Isaias:

'Behold God is my Saviour
I will deal confidently
And will not fear
Because the Lord is my strength
And my praise
And he is become my salvation
You shall draw waters with joy
Out of the Saviour's fountains.'
Isaias xii, 2, 3.

and again:

'Fear not, O my servant Jacob
And thou most righteous whom I have chosen
For I will pour out waters upon thirsty ground
And streams upon the dry land
I will pour out my spirit upon thy seed
And my blessing upon thy stock.'
Isaias xliv, 2, 3.

and yet again:

'They shall feed in the ways
And their pastures shall be in every plain
They shall not hunger nor thirst
Neither shall the heat nor the sun strike them
For he that is merciful to them

Shall be their shepherd
And at the fountains of waters
He shall give them drink.'

Isaias xlix, 9, 10.

Once more :

'All you that thirst
Come to the waters
And you that have no money
Make haste, buy and eat.'

Isaias lv, 1.

Again :

'And the Lord will give thee rest continually
And will fill thy soul with brightness
And deliver thy bones
And thou shalt be like a watered garden
And like a fountain of water
Whose waters shall not fail.'

Isaias lviii, 11.

Lastly, thus the prophet speaks of the final victory :

'Therefore thus saith the Lord God
Behold my servants shall eat
And you shall be hungry
Behold my servants shall drink
And you shall be thirsty
Behold my servants shall rejoice
And you shall be confounded
Behold my servants shall praise
For joyfulness of heart
And you shall cry
For sorrow of heart
And shall howl
For grief of spirit.'

Isaias lxv, 13, 14.

But not only Isaias ; other prophets, too, had spoken of the coming of the Lord and the spreading of His spirit in the language of overflowing waters. There was Ezechiel :

'And I will pour out upon you clean water
And you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness
And I will cleanse you from your idols

And I will give you a new heart
And put a new spirit within you
And I will take away the stony heart
Out of your flesh
And will give you a heart of flesh
And I will put my spirit in the midst of you.'

Ezechiel xxxvi, 25–27.

And again :

'And I will hide my face no more from them
For I have poured out my spirit
Upon all the house of Israel
Saith the Lord God.'

Ezechiel xxxix, 29.

There was the prophet Joel :

'And it shall come to pass after this
That I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy
And your old men shall dream dreams
And your young men shall see visions
Moreover upon my servants and handmaids
In those days
I will pour forth my spirit.'

Joel ii, 28.

And again :

'And it shall come to pass in that day
That the mountains shall drop down sweetness
And the hills shall flow with milk
And waters shall flow through all the rivers of Juda
And a fountain shall come forth
Of the house of the Lord
And shall water the torrent of thorns.'

Joel iii, 18.

There was the prophet Zachary :

'In that day
There shall be a fountain
Open to the house of David
And to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.'

Zachary xiii, 1.

In the Book of Ecclesiasticus the same imagery was common :

'The knowledge of a wise man
Shall abound like a flood
And his counsel continueth
Like a fountain of life.'
Ecclesiasticus xxi, 16.

'They that eat me
Shall yet hunger
And they that drink me
Shall yet thirst.'
Ecclesiasticus xxiv, 29.

Last of all :

'I wisdom have poured out rivers
I like a brook
Out of a river of a mighty water
I like a channel of a river
And like an aqueduct
Come out of paradise
I said
I will water my garden of plants
And I will water abundantly the fruits of my meadow
And behold my brook became a great river
And my river came near to a sea
For I make doctrine to shine forth to all
As the morning light
And I will declare it afar off.'
Ecclesiasticus xxiv, 40–44.

Passages like these in their sacred books were familiar to many of the men who heard Him ; the ceremony going on before their eyes reminding them of Him

'Who brought forth streams
Out of the hardest rock.'
Deuteronomy viii, 15.

The clear emphasis of the words of Jesus ; the sweeping appeal to all Scripture, not to any single text ; all these pointed to an inevitable conclusion. The words then being uttered could have only one interpretation. The Man before them, tenderly, persuasively, but no less firmly, was claiming the fulfilment of these prophecies in Himself ; He was claiming it, and at the same time He was promising untold blessings to those who would recognize His claim. The Evangelist himself is impressed by the words; he pauses to comment on them; he tells us they were themselves prophetic, and that in the final glory of Him who spoke them they found their fulfilment.

'Now this he said
Of the spirit which they should receive
Who believed in him
For as yet the spirit was not given
Because Jesus was not yet glorified.'

The people heard, and dimly understood, and were impressed more than ever. Again discussion was aroused, now more vehemently than before. At one time they had argued one with another concerning His credentials, crowned as they were by the evidence of His miracles; now it was the Man Himself, and the language He used, that overwhelmed them. They thirsted more than they knew, and in their hearts they felt that here was in truth the source of living water. Who then was He? John had passed away; apparently his mission had failed; perhaps this Man was the prophet that was to come and announce the Kingdom. In the last paschal season, down in Bethsaida on the Lake of Galilee, the miracle of bread had made men proclaim:

'This is indeed the prophet
That is come into the world';

now the promise of living water made many say the same. Nay, some would go further. Had not John come, and prophesied, and gone? Had he not said that this Jesus of Nazareth was the Lamb of God? Did not Jesus now maintain, and had He not maintained all the week, that He was just that, the messenger of God, the actual Messias? There could be no half-measures; either He must be rejected, or He must be accepted whole.

'Of the multitude therefore
When they had heard these words of his
Some said
This is the prophet indeed
Others said
This is the Christ.'

But again there came the inevitable reaction. Say what one might in His favour, recognize His truth, and grandeur, and sincerity as one must, there were still hard facts against Him which could not be gainsaid. This Man's origin was Galilee; He was of humble stock; yet the Scriptures said the Christ would be of the House of David and would come from Bethlehem. Had not the Psalmist sung:

'I have made a covenant with my elect
I have sworn to David my servant
Thy seed will I settle for ever
And I will build up thy throne
Unto generation and generation'?
Psalm lxxxviii, 4.

And Micheas had foretold:

'And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata
Art a little one among the thousands of Juda
Out of thee
Shall he come forth unto me
That is to be the ruler in Israel
And his going forth is from the beginning
From the days of eternity.'
Micheas v, 2.

Thus they argued; thus they hesitated; thus they found reason, and for them good reason, good enough, why they should receive Him not.

'But some said
Doth the Christ come out of Galilee?
Doth not the Scripture say
The Christ cometh of the seed of David
And from Bethlehem
The town where David was?
So there arose a dissension among the people
Because of him
And some of them would have apprehended him
But no man laid hands on him.'

Meanwhile among the Pharisees and rulers the tension grew greater. Already some days ago, as we have seen, they had met together and had decided to take action. While they themselves affected contempt and indifference concerning this Man and His pretensions, yet in secret they had sent their police to take Him. The police had not yet returned. They had not even submitted a report. Of course they had received instructions to act with caution, and that might explain their delay. They were to be careful not to rouse a conflict; the Galilæans in particular were in the town and were liable to give trouble. It might be some time before a convenient place and opportunity to take Him could be found.

Still in the city the talk concerning Him grew from bad to worse, and something must be done to check it. At first it had merely been:

'He is a good man',

and that could be passed over. Then it had grown to—

'How doth this man know letters
Having never learnt?'

which had proved that His words were making an impression. Next had been heard the murmur:

'Is not this he
Whom they seek to kill?
And behold
He speaketh openly
And they say nothing to him
Have the rulers known for a truth
That this is the Christ?'

This had roused them; but worse had followed. Since then men had seriously begun to ask the question:

'When the Christ cometh
Shall he do more miracles than these
Which this man doth?'

Until at last it had come to this, that men were openly saying:

'This is the prophet indeed
Others said
This is the Christ.'

The Pharisees and rulers had reason to be anxious.

At length some at least of their emissaries returned; but they came empty-handed. Had they met Him? Yes. Had they had an opportunity to take Him? Yes. Then why had they not done so? Why had they not done their duty?

'The ministers therefore came
To the chief priests and the Pharisees
And they said to them
Why have you not brought him?'

The answer was an overwhelming blow ; a last stroke, after all that had happened during these anxious days.

‘ The ministers answered
Never did man speak
Like this man.’

It will be well here to remind ourselves that during all the period of the Feast of Tabernacles there has not been a hint of a single miracle. Indeed, since the morning at the foot of Thabor, when He healed the boy possessed, after the night of the Transfiguration, we have had no mention of a miracle anywhere. Before that time, even in Galilee, for the period of miracles we must go back to the Pasch ; since the Pasch, in an interval of perhaps six months, the number of miracles recorded is five, and all of these but one have been wrought outside the strict limits of Israelitic land. In Jerusalem itself, during the whole life of Jesus to this moment, one miracle, and only one, has been mentioned ; and in the last few days this has been alluded to by Jesus Himself as if it stood alone.

‘ One work I have done ’, he said
‘ And you all wonder.
Are you angry
Because I have healed the whole man
On the sabbath day ? ’

In Jerusalem, therefore, it is not the working of miracles that has impressed the people ; it is the Man Himself, and what He has said, and the authority with which He has said it.

This is now brought home to us the more by the report of the police. Think of it ! At this beginning of His last campaign Jesus submitted to being the subject of a police investigation ! There was no charge against Him, unless it be the trumped-up charge of opposition to the Temple authorities ; the police were there to watch Him, and to make Him prisoner, merely as a matter of duty and no more. But when they stood among the crowd they were paralysed. They beheld the evident sincerity in His face ; they listened to His convincing words ; they saw with their own eyes how by His mere presence He suppressed every effort to create disturbance. They heard with their own ears the silencing of every commotion ; they knew with the shrewdness and experience of their calling that to take Him, whether openly or in secret, would only create further trouble. By His word alone He could pacify the crowd better than could all the Pharisees and rulers with all their following of satellites. He was the Master, of that there could be no doubt ; as the Master He spoke, 'and not as the Scribes and Pharisees'. Men listened, and were carried beyond themselves, and asked with deep seriousness whether He were not the Christ. What that meant these ministers of the rulers neither knew nor cared ; but this they did know, that the Man before them was true.

It was a plain conclusion, and they could come to no other. To imprison such a Man was on the face of it unjust ; it was more, it was imprudent. But unjust and imprudent or not, such a decision did not please their masters. Their scheme for victory, while they themselves lay in the background, had failed, their own emissaries had failed them. Then on their servants must their hatred be poured out ; and since this could not be done with justice, they would do it with contempt. Were they not the lords of all in the Temple ? Were they not the guides ? Did they not alone possess the power to discern what was truth and what was falsehood ? Had they not alone the right to judge ? Who but they were permitted to interpret the secrets of the Law ? They alone were the chosen of the chosen people ; to desert them on whatever ground was infidelity, to listen to any other voice was treachery, to follow any other, no matter on what evidence, was to be accursed. The attitude was and is nothing new. Their might was their right ; on that ground truth has been mangled since the beginning of the world.

'The Pharisees therefore answered them
'Are you also seduced ?
Hath any one of the rulers believed in him ?
Or of the Pharisees ?
But this multitude
That knoweth not the law
Is accursed.'

Still they were not unanimous. There were thinking rulers and Pharisees among them who were by no means convinced that what they did was either wise or right. Chief among these was Nicodemus. Long ago he had been impressed by the 'signs' about this Man, so much so as to seek an interview with Him. In that interview he had been bewildered by the teaching that he heard, so sublime, so mystical, so full of noble spirit, so absolute and sure. He had gone away pondering the more; through the succeeding months he had followed the Man's career from afar, and had seen in it nothing but utterly consistent truth. He had discussed Him with friends whom he could trust, and found others like himself perplexed. Though he attended the meetings of the Sanhedrin, yet he shrank before the manifest intolerance that was growing. Positively as yet he could himself do little, he was still not finally convinced; the weight of authority and tradition told heavily on the other side. But one thing at least he could do; whatever were the rights or wrongs of the question, at least he could plead for fair play.

On this ground, in the midst of the assumptions, Nicodemus ventured a remark. He was not on one side or the other; but for the honour of the Sanhedrin even a criminal must be allowed his due. And what was his due? They had just claimed that they alone knew the Law; they were its keepers and its ministers. And what said the Law? Not only that a man accused should be heard before condemnation; but that unless more than one evidently truthful witness were brought up against him he could not be condemned.

'By the mouth of two or three witnesses
Shall he die that is to be slain
Let no man be put to death
When only one beareth witness against him.'

Deuteronomy xvii, 6.

and again:

'One witness shall not rise up against any man
Whatsoever the sin or wickedness be
But in the mouth of two or three witnesses
Every word shall stand.'

Deuteronomy xix, 15.

To passages like these he appealed.

'Nicodemus said to them
He that came to him by night
Who was one of them

Doth our law judge any man
Unless it first hear him
And know what he doth ?'

But, as might have been expected, his protest only roused them the more. Whatever might be allowed, truth must not be given an opportunity to be heard. By bitter experience they had long since learnt that

'Never did man speak
Like this man';

let Him be brought before them with liberty to speak and they knew they would be worsted. They must keep their ground ; they must declare Him undeserving of a hearing ; they must be ever alert to put Him in the wrong ; on extrinsic evidence alone He must remain for ever condemned. Moreover there must be a catchword to serve their purpose.

'They answered and said to him
Art thou also a Galilæan ?
Search the Scriptures and see
That out of Galilee
A prophet riseth not.'

Such is the cruel lie of catchwords, even of catchwords founded on Scripture ; nay the more cruel, and the more a lie, the more sacred the text distorted to a purpose. In Galilee it had been :

'No prophet is received
In his own country.'

Now in Judæa it was :

'Out of Galilee
A prophet riseth not.'

Therefore both from Galilee and from Judæa the wise and sanctimonious world found full authority to expel Him. Nor, it would seem, once the catchword was invented, was its truth of much concern ; for if a prophet came not out of Galilee, then what of Jonas ? What of Elias and his school of prophets upon Carmel ? What of Eliseus, born hard by Scythopolis ? And probably there were others.

But the truth did not concern them now. They had been foiled of their prey, and their only remaining thought was vengeance. The meeting broke up, they went away to their homes, like beaten dogs to their kennels ; but they would bide their time.

CHAPTER XXIV

74. The Woman taken in Adultery

JESUS, too, went His way, as was His wont, to Olivet. We look across the valley of Kedron from the Golden Gate of the Temple and ask ourselves where He stayed. On the rising slope right opposite is Gethsemane, with the steep and narrow road climbing up the mountain on its left. It was a large estate, reaching down to the brook below and stretching considerably upward ; there must have been more than one place of shelter among the olive trees within its walls. Hither, we are told elsewhere, Jesus came at night so regularly that His friends knew where to find Him. We are now less than six months from the time when these words will be said of Him. During these six months He will be much away from the neighbourhood of Olivet. It seems, then, safe to say that He had already begun His custom of spending His nights in the Garden ; already He had begun that habit of prayer on the spot where He was soon to be kissed into bondage. He knew it would be ; on that spot it would be ; the men whom in the city He was day by day defying, and whose emissaries would not lay hands upon Him, would one day take Him here and do with Him what they would.

Strictly the Feast of Tabernacles was of a week's duration, but the custom had long grown old of adding an eighth day of final rejoicing. Jesus spent the night on Olivet ; the next morning He came again into the Temple area, and again the people gathered round Him. This time He acted with still more unconcern and authority. During the period of the feast He had been always on the defensive ; the change had come yesterday, when, as we have seen, He had called to all the world :

> ' If any man thirst
> Let him come to me
> And drink.'

To-day with yet more gentle assurance He became again familiar.

'And early in the morning
He came again into the temple
And all the people came to him
And sitting down
He taught them.'

The words are the words of S. John. Yet how like to the words of the other Evangelists, when they have described happy reunions on the hill-sides, and along the roads, and in the synagogues of Galilee ! It is the same Jesus here in the Temple, even when described by the Son of Thunder ; the same Light of men breaking through the clouds which, during all this week, have hung over the city.

But while peace thus began to reign around Him, in other quarters there were other changes. It was not uncommon for the Feast of Tabernacles, as for other feasts, to end in a night of revelry ; at the end of all festivals the city was often in confusion and the police had much to do. As a consequence, in the court that morning, a bedraggled woman was brought up for trial on a charge of adultery. It was said she had been caught in the act ; the evidence was so clear that questions and examination were superfluous. She was guilty ; she made no effort to deny it or explain ; it only remained that she should be sentenced. But that was not always easy. According to the Law of Moses the punishment of adultery was death, but, long since, that had fallen into abeyance ; the Roman ordinance had taken from the Jewish court the power of life and death.

On a sudden, while the trial was proceeding, a happy thought occurred to one among her judges. While they were seated there dispensing the Law of Moses, in the court outside sat Another, dispensing a new Law. They could not forget Him, they could no longer ignore Him. This very day, this very moment, He was proving by His manner that He had beaten them ; a little more, and the people of Jerusalem would follow Him as the people of Galilee had already done. Their policy of contempt had been of no avail ; their scheme to make Him prisoner had failed ; they must try some other way, they must fall back upon old methods of guile and deception. Let them take this woman to Him; let them invite Him to pass sentence upon her. If He condemned her, then it could be shown that He was not so merciful as men imagined; if He let her go, then most certainly He would contravene the Law of Moses. Again, if He condemned, it might be said that He defied the Roman ordinance; nay, if He passed sentence at all, could it not be said that in this at least He had gone beyond His rights? For with all His claims, and with all the titles given to Him, who could say that He had been appointed a judge in the courts of criminal law? Whatever happened, whatever He might choose to do or say, it seemed that they were bound to catch Him. They sallied out expectant from their hall of justice, and the hapless woman was dragged after them.

'And the scribes and Pharisees
Bring unto him a woman
Taken in adultery
And they set her in the midst
And said to him
Master
This woman was even now taken in adultery
But Moses in the law commanded us
To stone such a one
But what sayest thou?
And this they said tempting him
That they might accuse him.'

'Master'! What a change of front is here! Yesterday in their secret conclave they had condemned this Man as a usurper and a disturber of the peace, and now He is the 'Master'! Yesterday the thought of a prophet ever coming out of Galilee was jeered at as impossible; to-day His judgement is invoked to interpret the Law of Moses! Yesterday He was the criminal; to-day He is asked to be the judge.

But Jesus 'knew what was in man'; and now by long experience as well He knew what was in these Pharisees. The last time He had openly encountered them had been in Decapolis. Even there they had begun these present tactics. They had come to Him in a mood of affected enquiry; they had not criticized, they had not contended, they had simply asked a question like plain men seeking for guidance. On that occasion He had given them short shrift. He had answered them curtly, in words they would not at the moment understand, and had then abruptly turned His back upon them. Now, therefore, He was prepared for their coming, and the lesson of the former time He would drive further home. For a moment He looked at them ; not a word did He speak ; then, as if they were no concern of His, as if He had forgotten or ignored their presence, or as if that presence were no more than a weary interruption, He turned away from them where He sat, bent down to the ground, and with His finger began to make signs and figures on the earth at His feet. He seemed to behave as a man or a child might behave, scrawling on the ground in a moment of leisure.

But His tempters were not now to be easily shaken off. They had come to catch Him, they must make Him speak ; anything He might say would serve their purpose. His silence showed that He was perplexed ; that He wished to avoid them proved at last that they had entrapped Him. He had always answered them before ; now He knew not how to escape them. They urged their plea ; they became importunate ; in their over-zeal these self-respecting Scribes and Pharisees tended to become unmannerly. It was a shadow of that terrible day to come when their self-respect would utterly desert them. They pressed closer about Him ; the woman in their midst was forgotten ; they now flew for higher prey.

At length, in the midst of their clamour, Jesus condescended to acknowledge them. He stopped in His meditative writing on the ground. He looked up from where He sat, at the eager, exultant, gloating eyes that looked down on Him. Then He said :

‘ He that is without sin among you
Let him first cast a stone at her.’

This was an answer different from that contained in the Law of Moses. Moses had written :

‘ The hands of the witnesses
Shall be the first upon him to kill him
And afterwards the hands of the rest of the people.’
Deuteronomy xvii, 7.

In this way the prophet had laid upon the witnesses the responsibility for the victim’s death. But Jesus would go further. They wished Him to be judge; on the woman at least He would pass no sentence. They wished Him either to condemn or to acquit; He would do neither; that function belonged by law to them. At least, then, they wished that He would give them His opinion concerning the nature of the punishment; that, too, He would decline. They had quoted the Law; if the Law needed to be altered, it was for them to judge. One thing only He would do. Since they quoted Moses, He would accept Moses, but would perfect him. If the woman was to die, then let not the witnesses be responsible but those who condemned her; and since no one who himself was guilty could justly condemn, then let the innocent among them begin.

'He that is without sin among you
Let him first cast a stone.'

So He spoke, looking up from His stooping position, and immediately again turned away. He resumed the writing with His finger in the dust. With insincerity Jesus had invariably one method; He ignored it; above all when it took the form of obsequious treachery. To think that Jesus Christ could ever have been treated thus! To think that He could so submit to it that in the end it could compass His ruin and His death! And He knew it all the time.

Still their hour was not yet come. He continued His writing on the ground; what He wrote we do not know. But we do not need to know; the simple words He had said are sufficient to explain what followed. He had shown that He read them through and through; to stay longer within reach of those searching eyes was inconvenient. There was no answer to be made. He had recognized their full authority, and of that they could not complain. They had asked His advice and He had given it, unexpected as it had been. They had called Him 'Master', and by a simple sentence He had shown that indeed He was. But alongside of this, while reverencing the Law He had broken through the bondage that encircled it. Like the Baptist of old, like Himself upon the mountain, He had pierced through their armour and reached their very hearts, and their hearts tingled at His touch. For this they were not prepared. They were silent; there was nothing to be said; if they did attempt to speak, this all-seeing Man might humble them beyond recovery. The oldest among them set their faces. This was no place for them; let the younger ones brave it out as they might. One by one they turned about and slunk away, carrying with them their hoary reputation. And after them the younger men soon followed; without their elders the risk in the contest was too great. They forgot their victim, they forgot their vaunted zeal for justice, they feared now only for themselves. It was not long before not one of them was left beneath that portico.

Jesus waited till all were gone. As if engaged with His own thoughts, He went on writing with His finger in the dust. At length all were gone. He stopped writing; He looked up. The only one before Him was the unhappy woman, standing, awaiting her sentence. Be it noticed she had not run away. She was free, but she did not go; she was covered with shame, but she made no attempt to hide. Sinners, for some reason, did not hide themselves from Jesus; one before now, more shameless and disgraced than this one, had defied all the frowns of the Pharisees of Magdala that she might be near Him.

Jesus sat before the woman on His seat of judgement. Now He was no longer indifferent; now He was about His Father's business. He had come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and here was one. He had come not to condemn but to save; from His heart the prayer was for ever going up:

'Father
Forgive them
They know not what they do.'

He looked at her; He gave her the courage to look at Him. He looked at her, and she knew that she was safe. He looked at her, and she forgot all else, her accusers, her captors, her shame, almost the sin she had committed. He looked at her, and her guilty love was gone, lost in the love, the trust, the security of Him. He looked at her, and she wanted nothing more. Then He spoke, but not a word of blame; at first He made as if He ignored whether she was innocent or guilty. She had been accused, no more; but the accusation had not yet been proved.

'Woman',

He said, and the word He used was a title of respect, a title He had given to His own Mother :

‘ Where are they that accused thee ?
Hath no man condemned thee ? ’

The question gave her infinite courage. No man indeed had finally condemned her ; they had suspended their judgement, that He might pass the last sentence. Her accusers were gone ; whither she did not know nor did she care. With a light heart now she could answer His question ; He did not even ask that she should confess her guilt.

‘ Who said
No man
Lord.’

It was enough. It was an act of trust, an act of utter confiding ; from such a poor creature faith was not yet to be expected. Some day it might come ; meanwhile He would send her on her way a happy woman, and in her new happiness strong to be better.

‘ And Jesus said
Neither will I condemn thee
Go
And now sin no more.’

The woman went as she was bid, slow to leave Him, with fresh tears in her eyes, but very different from those which had been there a few moments earlier. Before she had wept at the thought of coming near Him, now she wept because she had to go away. She went ; and what became of her we shall know when we meet her in heaven.

There are those who would eliminate this story as not belonging to the Scripture narrative. They would say that it makes too little account of sin ; that it displays Jesus in a manner which encourages presumption in the sinner. Yet why ? Taken in its exact significance, it is even less dangerous than other scenes in which we have seen Him ; when out of a sinful woman, far more callous it would seem than this one, He made His first apostle in Samaria ; when almost on this very spot He said to a man whom He had healed,

‘ Sin no more
Lest worse evils befall thee ’ ;

when in Capharnaum He spoke to a palsied man :

‘ Be of good heart
Son
Thy sins are forgiven thee ’,

and, by healing him, proved that His words were true ; when at a Pharisee’s table He said of another guilty woman :

‘ Many sins are forgiven her
Because she hath loved much ’ ;

and then to her, though she had uttered not a word :

‘ Thy sins are forgiven thee
Go in peace.’

If we eliminate this story on the ground of its excessive mercy we must eliminate others yet more merciful ; and that we cannot do. It would be to distort the whole picture of Jesus as the Evangelists have drawn it for us.

75. The End of the Feast

But before that festival was over there was other work to be done. Yesterday He had spoken to the people very plainly, and in some measure they had responded ; to-day the Pharisees should have their special grace. Often enough in the coming months He would speak to them ; but the like of this they would never have again. In the court of the women the candelabra were still burning, the light that shone for all the city. He left the place where He had been seated ; He walked boldly into the treasury, where He knew the Pharisees were gathered. Once more He took His imagery from what was going on around Him ; in the colour of that imagery He now made a proclamation, a claim, greater than any He had ever made before within the Temple area.

‘ Again therefore Jesus spoke to them saying
I am the light of the world
He that followeth me
Walketh not in darkness
But shall have the light of life.’

‘ The people that walked in darkness
Have seen a great light
To them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death
Light is risen.’

Isaias ix, 2.

'I the Lord
Have called thee in justice
And taken thee by the hand
And preserved thee
And I have given thee
For a covenant of the people
For a light of the Gentiles
That thou mightest open the eyes of the blind
And bring forth the prisoner out of prison
And them that sit in darkness
Out of the prison house
I the Lord
This is my name.'

Isaias xlii, 6–8.

'And he said
It is a small thing
That thou shouldst be my servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob
And to convert the dregs of Israel
Behold I have given thee
To be the light of the Gentiles
That thou mayst be my salvation
Even to the farthest parts of the earth
Thus saith the Lord
The redeemer of Israel
His Holy One
To the soul that is despised
To the nation that is abhorred
To the servant of rulers
Kings shall see
And princes shall rise up
And adore for the Lord's sake
Because he is faithful
And for the Holy One of Israel
Who hath chosen thee.'

Isaias xlix, 6, 7.

'He revealeth deep and hidden things
And knoweth what is in darkness
And light is with him.'

Daniel ii, 22.

In the flaming brilliance of these prophecies, known to them all, there was no mistaking the meaning of the words of Jesus. Here in the Temple court, on the threshold of the Holy of Holies, before the chosen leaders and propounders of the Jewish Code, He made a fourfold declaration. The prophecies were there and then fulfilled ; the light had come. They were fulfilled in Him :

'I am the light.'

They were fulfilled, not for the chosen people only, but, as they had said, for all mankind :

'I am the light of the world.'

That fulfilment meant for all the world, as again the prophecies had said, a new understanding, a new orientation, a new life, a re-creation :

'He that followeth me
Walketh not in darkness
But shall have the light of life.'

It was tremendous. Nothing quite of this kind had He said before ; even the Twelve heard it and were awed. 'The Light of the World !' The words sank deep into their memories, never to be effaced, often to be revived, as the best means of expressing that which it was their vocation to witness to for all time. S. Luke has told us how, almost on this very spot, an old man had taken a Child in his arms and had called Him

'Thy salvation which thou hast prepared
Before the face of all peoples
A light to the revelation of the Gentiles
And the glory of thy people Israel.'

When S. Matthew opened the story of his public career, we have seen how he fell back upon one of those prophecies :

'The people that walked in darkness
Have seen a great light.'

S. John could never lay the imagery aside.

'In him was life
And the life was the light of men
And the light shineth in darkness
And the darkness did not comprehend it
That was the true light
Which enlighteneth every man
That cometh into this world.'
John i, 4–9.

'And this is the judgement
Because the light is come into the world
And men loved darkness
Rather than the light
For their works were evil
For everyone that doth evil
Hateth the light
And cometh not to the light
That his works may not be reproved
But he that doth the truth
Cometh to the light
That his works may be made manifest
Because they are done in God.'
John iii, 19–21.

Years afterwards, when at length at Antioch in Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas broke away from their Jewish brethren, and began to turn to the Gentiles, for their justification they fell back upon one of these very prophecies.

'Then Paul and Barnabas said boldly
To you it behoved first
To speak the word of God
But because you reject it
And judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life
Behold we turn to the Gentiles
For so the Lord hath commanded us
I have set thee
To be the light of the Gentiles
That thou mayst be for salvation
Unto the utmost part of the earth.'
Acts xiii, 46, 47.

If on the untrained disciples these words made so deep an impression, much more must their significance have gone home to the Pharisees and Scribes. They knew their Scriptures, they knew their Prophets. Some parts of the prophecies might be doubtfully interpreted, others could scarcely be misunderstood. And these from Isaias were among the latter. Openly, definitely, without any further possibility of escape, this Jesus before them that day was summing up and crowning all He had said to them before. He was bringing to a point the evidence of all His life; He was following up the concession they had made to Him that morning when they had allowed Him the title of 'Master'. He was making one last bold stroke, one last daring venture; He was holding out as it were a bait before their eyes to win them. He was throwing His whole self, His whole heart, His whole burning, longing love into this last appeal, that they should accept Him as the fulfilment of prophecy, the Light of the World, the Life of Men.

And they acknowledged that they understood well enough. They did not contradict; they did not affect to be scandalized. For once they did not call Him a blasphemer or a breaker of the Law; instead they fell back upon that common subterfuge employed by those whose will is not to believe. They pleaded want of light; they asked for further evidence; they questioned the value of His witness.

'The Pharisees therefore said to him
Thou givest testimony of thyself
Thy testimony is not true.'

Still did Jesus endure them. His hour was not yet come, nor was theirs. Though they refused to believe His word, though they hinted that He was untrue, still did He endure them, and argue with them, and try to win them to Himself. Of all the ways of Jesus, none so astonishes our human nature as this constant urbanity with those who wickedly maligned Him.

'Jesus answered and said to them
My testimony is true
For I know whence I came
And whither I go
You judge according to the flesh
I judge not any man
And if I do judge
My judgement is true
Because I am not alone
But I and the Father that sent me
And in your law it is written
That the testimony of two men is true
I am one
That give testimony of myself
And the Father who sent me
Giveth testimony of me.'

In the early days, when Jesus first spoke in Jerusalem, His hearers had

‘ Sought to kill him
Because he made God his Father.’

Now they hear Him speak daring things about that Father and are less affected. And at this point He opens, as it were, a formal course of instruction, beginning with the witness of the Father concerning Himself, ending with the union of the two. It is given in the manner of S. John. The interpretation of that manner may differ according to the minds of scholars. For us it is enough to let him speak, believing that he expresses, not only the substance of these discussions, but also at times his own accurate comment, inserted for our better guidance and understanding. For the present we need say no more. Throughout the words of S. John the character of Jesus is sufficiently manifest, strong yet ever yielding, accurate yet ever patiently explaining, longing with love yet compelled to condemn, thinking the best yet never hesitating to point out what was evil, threatening yet at the same moment appealing to men to come to Him, championing His cause without hesitation, even while He keeps Himself the lowest of them all.

‘ They said therefore to him
Where is thy Father ?
Jesus answered
Neither me do you know
Nor my Father
If you did know me
Perhaps you would know my Father also.’

Significantly, as in other places where he has told us something of great moment, S. John concludes by pointing out the very spot in which these words were spoken ; he adds an effect which, he claims, needs a supernatural explanation.

‘ These words Jesus spoke
In the treasury
Teaching in the temple
And no man laid hands on him
Because his hour was not yet come.’

And now, with S. John, let the controversy follow its own course.

'Again therefore Jesus said to them: I go, and you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin. Whither I go you cannot come. The Jews therefore said: Will he kill himself? because he said: Whither I go you cannot come. And he said to them: You are from beneath, I am from above. You are of this world. Therefore I said to you that you shall die in your sins. For if you believe not that I am he you shall die in your sin. They said therefore to him: Who art thou? Jesus said to them: The beginning, who also speak unto you. Many things I have to speak and to judge of you; but he that sent me is true, and the things I have heard of him, these same I speak in the world. And they understood not that he called God his Father. Jesus therefore said to them: When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father hath taught me, these things I speak. And he that sent me is with me; and he hath not left me alone, for I do always the things that please him.

'When he spoke these things many believed in him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him: If you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him: We are the seed of Abraham, and we have never been slaves to any man; how sayest thou: You shall be free? Jesus answered them: Amen, Amen I say unto you, that whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. Now the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the son abideth for ever. If therefore the son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. I know that you are the children of Abraham; but you seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak the things which I have seen with my Father, and you do the things that you have seen with your father. They answered and said to him: Abraham is our father. Jesus saith to them: If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill me, a man who have spoken the truth to you; which Abraham did not. You do the works of your father. They said therefore to him: We are not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus therefore said to them: If God were your Father, you would indeed love me, for from God I proceeded and came. For I came not of myself; but he sent me. Why do you not know my speech? Because you cannot hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth, because the truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father thereof. But if I say the truth, you believe me not. Which of you shall convince me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God; therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.

'The Jews therefore answered and said to him: Do not we say well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil? Jesus answered: I have not a devil, but I honour my Father, and you have dishonoured me. But I seek not my own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, Amen I say to you, if any man keep my word he shall not see death for ever. The Jews therefore said: Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest: If any man keep my word he shall not taste death for ever. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead, and the prophets are dead? Whom dost thou make thyself? Jesus answered: If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing: it is my Father that glorified me, of whom you say that he is your God. And you have not known him; but I know him. And if I shall say that I know him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know him, and do keep his word. Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see my day; he saw it and was glad. The Jews therefore said to him: Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them: Amen, Amen I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.'

Thus ended the momentous Feast of Tabernacles. It is the third recorded visit of Jesus to Jerusalem. Each of them is told to us by S. John, and by S. John alone; had we not his witness we might have supposed that He went there only once, and that was in the last week, to die. But S. John has another end in view from that of the other three Evangelists; while they are concerned with the manifestation of Jesus, he is concerned chiefly with His rejection.

'He came unto his own
And his own received him not',

rings through all the pages of S. John, from the great introduction even to the end of the Apocalypse.

Alongside and in consequence of this is the greater manifestation which it is S. John's mission to describe. While the others tell us of the miracles of Jesus, of the human side of His teaching, of His parables, of His dealing alike with friends and enemies, S. John from the first emphasizes the divine revelation, and that he may do this he must spend most of his time in Jerusalem. For in Jerusalem the preaching of Jesus was from the first different from that which it was in Galilee. In Galilee He had to deal with simple people, however rude, unlearned, submissive to their guides. These He led upwards, from one thing to another, coming down to their daily lives and drawing them to Him, winning them in every way He could, by example, by word, by favours bestowed, until they might own Him and confess Him. In Jerusalem it was quite otherwise. Here He had people about Him, sophisticated, astute, who reflected the minds of the priests and rulers, the Scribes and doctors of the Law, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the rest. It was the difference between Oxford, London, and some cathedral city, combined on one side, and a north-country district on the other. To such men new doctrine must be tried on the anvil of older prejudice, example was circumscribed by unyielding convention; as evidence of the supernatural, miracles meant very little; on such men human sympathy made almost no impression. Instead they worshipped the Law. Its precepts, or rather the customs, and traditions, and regulations, and interpretations that gathered round them, were the only moral code. To them, instead of miracles, the fulfilment of prophecy, and of prophecy as they interpreted and wished it, was the sign they looked for. As for teaching, they were proud of their authority; they were loath to accept any other; the Temple was the centre from which all Judaism drew its life, and they were the rulers of the Temple.

That from the first Jesus recognized this difference and acted accordingly seems evident. In Jerusalem He began by striking at the bulwark of authority, which would exclude Him from a right to a hearing. He defied the conventional standard of righteousness, substituting truth for form, the spirit of the Law for the letter. Miracles for the most part He laid aside ; up to the point at which we have arrived we have record of only one worked in Jerusalem, and there is no allusion to another. In their place, His language teems with references and phrases which a student of the Law and the prophets could not fail to recognize. For the subject-matter of His discourses, it is no longer the practical beatitude of the Sermon on the Mount, nor even the hidden mystery of the Parables, least of all is it of that great gift offered in the synagogue at Capharnaum. Instead it is an appeal to that higher learning which these masters in Jerusalem possess ; their knowledge of the Scriptures, their hope of a Messias, their dreams of who that Messias will be. It appealed, too, to that mystical element, common to all religion in the East, but with the Jews peculiarly intimate ; which went back to Abraham, and still in His own day was seen fully alive, in Mary His Mother, and Zachary and Elizabeth and John the Baptist, in Simeon and Anna, in Nicodemus ; and which gave them visions of God and men beyond their powers to express. On all this He built ; this He interpreted for them ; out of it He drew doctrine far more sublime than anything He could have taught in Galilee.

That from the beginning this was true ; that in studying the Jews of Our Lord's time we must make a sharp distinction between the people of Judæa and those of every other district, seems abundantly manifest. This distinction goes far to explain the different treatment dealt out to them by Jesus Himself ; the sparsity of miracles, the vehemence of His threats and warnings, on the other hand the warmth of His appeals and the heights to which He offers to lift them ; the unsparing clearness of His doctrine, and the keen desire He shows, here more than anywhere, that He should be accepted ; the constant effort, constantly renewed, to win them. For evidence we have only to look back. The events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist, the apparition of the angel to Zachary, his dumbness and his recovery, his singing of the Benedictus, show an atmosphere very different from anything we discover in Nazareth or Capharnaum. This is emphasized the more by the meeting with Simeon and Anna on the Temple steps. Both of these, and they were not alone, were awaiting eagerly the manifestation to Israel, and to them it did not come by miracles. When a little later the Wise Men from the East came seeking for the new-born King, it was in Jerusalem they learnt, without a moment's hesitation, where they might hope to find Him. Later again, when the Child was twelve years old, the doctors of Jerusalem discovered in Him more at one interview than the Nazarenes discovered after all their thirty years of constant intercourse.

So it was from the outset, and so it continued to the end. When the manifestation began, it was the people of Judæa who crowded round the Baptist more than any other, and to them from the first he was able to speak in no measured terms. He was 'the voice of one crying in the desert, Prepare ye the way of the Lord', and they understood, as others did not, precisely what that portended.

'Then went out to him
All the country of Judæa
And all they of Jerusalem
And all the country about Jordan
And they were baptized by him
In the river Jordan
Confessing their sins.'

So much, even so early, did they understand and anticipate that they were in danger of drawing wrong conclusions. While the people of Judæa were disposed to take the prophet John for their Christ, and that without a single miracle or other supernatural sign, the people of Galilee, with all their signs and miracles, could never go beyond declaring Christ to be a prophet.

The mentality of the people of Judæa is confirmed, in spite of themselves, by the attitude of the Pharisees and Scribes and doctors. Though later, when no other means would serve, they affected contempt for Jesus of Nazareth, in the beginning they did not contemn either John or Him. Instead they partly gave John their approval; when they grew more anxious they sent men to examine him; and it is to be noticed that the theme of their enquiry was, not whether or not he was a mere fanatic, but whether or not he was the Christ.

'And this is the testimony of John
When the Jews sent from Jerusalem
Priests and Levites to him

To ask him : Who art thou ?
And he confessed
And did not deny
And he confessed
I am not the Christ.'

Nothing of this kind do we discover among the people or the priests of Galilee ; when the questioning begins in the northern province it has to be imported from Judæa and Jerusalem.

At length Jesus Himself appears. He takes up His abode in Capharnaum, but before He will do anything there He will first go up to the Pasch in Jerusalem. At once what a difference of attitude ! He enters simple and ignorant Galilee, comforting anxious servants at a marriage feast even though it calls for a miracle ; He enters Jerusalem with a lash in His hand, and fire flashing from His eyes, upbraiding its leaders because they had shamed His Father's house.

'Take these things hence
And make not the house of my Father
A house of traffic.'

What was the consequence of this outburst of wrath ? The men of Judæa did not too much resent it. They did not take up stones to stone Him, because He so abused the Father's name. They merely questioned Him, suspecting, fearing, knowing very well that something of this kind was only to be expected when the true Messias came.

'The Jews therefore answered and said to him
What sign dost thou shew unto us
Seeing thou dost these things ?'

And Jesus treated them, not as the Galilæans, those 'sheep without a shepherd' whom He 'taught many things', but as men who knew and understood. There and then, thus early in His career, He pronounced to the leaders of Jerusalem the first and most momentous of His prophecies. He gave them the sign they demanded, which they were able to interpret while His own Galilæan Apostles could not.

'Jesus answered and said to them
Destroy this temple
And in three days I will raise it up.'

There follows the interview with the Pharisee Nicodemus; seemingly so out of place alongside of the doings and teaching in Galilee, but perfectly in keeping with the spirit of Jerusalem, and the searching of hearts that was going on within its walls. Nicodemus was a thoughtful Pharisee; he with the rest was expecting a Messias; he could read the signs as well as others; he was prepared to interpret them aright, no matter what the cost; he was ready to accept the Messias' message, however far it might be beyond his comprehension; and for him the best evidence lay in the signs contained in the sacred books. Nothing of this kind is to be found in Galilee, or elsewhere out of Judæa. To Nicodemus of Jerusalem He could already say:

'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert
So must the Son of Man be lifted up
That whosoever believeth in him
May not perish
But may have everlasting life';

to the people of Galilee, after this meeting is over, Jesus must still be content to announce:

'The time is accomplished
And the kingdom of God is at hand
Repent
And believe the Gospel.'

The same contrast is again brought out in the next sorrow in the life of Jesus,—the rejection at Nazareth, and the attempt there made upon His life. He was rejected at Nazareth, He was rejected at Jerusalem; but the cause of the rejection was by no means the same. At Nazareth it arose from mere ignorance and dulness, at Jerusalem it came from knowledge and acute understanding. At Nazareth country villagers were scandalized because a mere country villager claimed the fulfilment of prophecy in Himself, whatever that might mean; at Jerusalem men were shocked because they knew the prophets, and saw how this Man came near to fulfil them. At Nazareth it was just assumed that Jesus could not be true; at Jerusalem we are told many times:

'Many believed in him',

having thought the matter out for themselves.

We come next to Our Lord's second visit to Jerusalem; once more it is a passage from a vale of comparative peace to a land of storm and tempest. He goes up alone; it is not without its significance that in Jerusalem He seems always to prefer to fight His battle single-handed. At the Probatic Pool He works His first recorded miracle in the Holy City. He works it on a Sabbath day, though another day would have served Him just as well; at the same time He gives the healed man an order which will compel him, too, to disregard the strictness of the Sabbath. By doing all this He deliberately stirs up controversy. Only by stirring up controversy can He reach the hearts of the people of Jerusalem; in Galilee,

'I say to you',

is almost invariably enough.

'Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus
Because he did these things on the sabbath.'

They did not deny the miracle; they fell back on the knowledge of the Law. This we never find among the people of Galilee or elsewhere.

But neither did He stop there. The Jews of Jerusalem appealed to the Law; in dealing with them He appealed to the Maker of the Law, the Father, God Himself, and to His spokesman, Moses. He claimed God for His Father, and Jerusalem understood; Galilee would have taken His words less literally.

'Hereupon therefore
The Jews sought the more to kill him
Because he did not only break the sabbath
But also said God was his Father
Making himself equal to God.'

He defended Himself before them by reference to Moses, their final court of appeal; in Galilee He spoke on His own authority.

'Think not that I will accuse you to the Father
There is one that accuseth you
Moses
In whom you trust
For if you did believe Moses

You would perhaps believe me also
For he wrote of me
But if you do not believe his writings
How will you believe my words ? '

Outside Judæa nothing of this kind was needed. Elsewhere He worked miracles on the Sabbath, and only when Pharisees came down from Jerusalem did men begin to be scandalized. Elsewhere He called God His Father ; elsewhere He could go further and call Him ' Our Father ', and His audience were only ' astonished at His doctrine, because He spoke as one having authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees '. Only when the men from Jerusalem made their influence felt was there any hesitation.

All this must needs be borne in mind if we would rightly interpret the attitude of Jesus in the streets of Jerusalem, in contrast with His attitude in any other place. In the more pagan districts, Tyre and Sidon and Decapolis, He was just tolerant. There He exacted little or nothing ; so far as we can see, He taught nothing. If the people said they did not want Him, He quietly took them at their word and went away.

' And all the multitude of the country of the Gerasenes
Began to beseech him
That he would depart from their coasts
For they were taken with great fear
And he going into the ship
Returned back again.'

In Galilee His attitude was one of unconquerable sympathy and pity.

' And seeing the multitude
He had compassion on them
Because they were distressed
And lying like sheep that have no shepherd.'

There in consequence He

' Went about all the cities and towns and villages
Teaching in their synagogues
And preaching the gospel of the kingdom
And healing every disease
And every infirmity.'

In Jerusalem and its neighbourhood we hear nothing of this. One word only does He address to them both, when He says to the Pharisees in presence of the rest:

'They that are in health
Have no need of a physician
But they that are sick
Go then
And learn what this meaneth
I will have mercy
And not sacrifice
For I am come
Not to call the just
But sinners
To penance.'

Some further considerations will help to make more clear the attitude in Jerusalem. On the one hand, in the Holy City itself and throughout Judæa, there was a large body of believers among the common people; men who at the first had been won by John, who had followed Jesus in yet greater numbers when He, too, had preached by the Jordan, who had gone into Galilee after Him in the days of His progress, and who now, when He appeared in their district, made no small effort in the hubbub to get their voices heard. On the other hand, not all the Pharisees were bitterly opposed. Some had invited Him to dine with them at Magdala, and here in Judæa like cases are to follow. It would seem that the hatred unto death was confined to the clique that held the reins of power at the centre, and such allies, Herodians, Sadducees, and others, as by political interest could be induced to join them. But in regard to both of these, as always happens, the noisy and violent and unscrupulous bore down the silent and meek and true; with the result that, except for a few feeble protestations which seem to end in nothing, the Scripture narrative, especially that of John, gives us a first impression of enmity and opposition, and of little else. Still, to draw this conclusion would be a mistake; Jesus did not 'cast His pearls before swine'. While John emphasizes the conduct of those who would not receive Him, nevertheless we have proof enough that His words were not wholly thrown away. What He said may have been 'hidden from the wise and prudent', but there were many 'little ones' in His company to whom it was revealed.

Another point deserves to be recalled; it is the steady, unflinching, open, consistent, almost contemptuous defiance of the Pharisees which from the first Jesus made no effort to conceal. Not only when they interrupted Him, or criticized His actions, or murmured against Him, did He invariably silence them; often enough, without any provocation, He poured out His scorn on their insincerity, and falsehood, and blindness. As early as in the Sermon on the Mount we have heard Him saying:

'I tell you
That unless your justice abound
More than that of the scribes and Pharisees
You shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven';

and in the same Sermon none could fail to recognize to whom He alluded when He said:

'When thou dost an almsdeed
Sound not a trumpet before thee
As the hypocrites do in the synagogues
And in the streets
That they may be honoured by men.'
'And when ye pray
Ye shall not be as the hypocrites
That love to stand and pray in the synagogues
And corners of the streets
That they may be seen by men.'
'And when you fast
Be not as the hypocrites
Sad
For they disfigure their faces
That they may appear unto men to fast.'
'Beware of false prophets
Who come to you in the clothing of sheep
But inwardly they are ravening wolves.'

And it is remarkable that the lasting impression of that Sermon was that He taught

'As one having power
And not as the scribes and Pharisees.'

This same attitude He constantly maintained, indeed the vehemence only increased with time. Thus, on the famous day when the thronging of the crowd reached its climax, and when in the evening by the lake He began His new course of preaching by parables, before a gathered mass of people, to

‘ The Pharisees and scribes
Who were come down from Jerusalem ’,

we find Him speaking in such terms as these :

‘ O generation of vipers
How can you speak good things
Whereas you are evil ?
For out of the abundance of the heart
The mouth speaketh.’

If in the days of His prosperity He could so address them, no less emphatic, almost more scornful, could He be when His star had passed its zenith. Months later, after the Pasch, when

‘ Many of his disciples went back
And walked no more with him ’,
‘ There assembled together unto him
The Pharisees and some of the scribes
Coming unto him ’ ;

and His answer to their questionings was no more than this :

‘ Well did Isaias prophesy
Of you hypocrites
As it is written
This people honoureth me with their lips
But their heart is far from me.’

And that same day, when the Twelve, already troubled by the falling off of many, now feared because of the Pharisaic opposition, and when in consequence they

‘ Came and said to him
Dost thou know
That the Pharisees when they heard the word
Were scandalized ? ’

He again poured out His withering contempt :

‘ But he answering said
Every plant which my Father hath not planted
Shall be rooted up
Let them alone
They are blind
And leaders of the blind
And if the blind lead the blind
Both fall into the pit.’

One last interview we have recorded before He came up to this Feast of Tabernacles, and still He shows the same scorn. Though He was more or less in hiding, though He would not yet go into Judæa because His life was there in danger, though for a long time He had even found it prudent to keep out of Galilee itself, yet in Decapolis, when some Pharisees and Sadducees had succeeded in crossing His path, He answers their questions in these terms :

'Why doth this generation ask a sign?
Amen I say to you
A wicked and adulterous generation
Asketh for a sign
And a sign shall not be given it
But the sign of Jonas the prophet.'

With that and no more He turned away from them, giving this warning to His Twelve :

'Take heed and beware
Of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.'

In the light of all this we may now understand a little better the complete change of attitude in Jesus when He fought His battle in the streets of Jerusalem during all this eventful Feast of Tabernacles. His friends had asked Him to go up with them, and He had declined. For excuse the only reason He had given was this :

'The world cannot hate you
But me it hateth
Because I give testimony of it
That the works thereof are evil.'

In other words He knew that He was going into the midst of bitter enemies ; and He would not that others should suffer because of their association with Him. Arrived there, He laid down first of all the principle by which He would be judged and understood. Not the Law as it was then interpreted, not convention, not custom, the substitute for the moral code, but the will of God must be the key to the right understanding of the word of God.

'My doctrine is not mine
But his that sent me
If any man will do the will of him
He shall know of the doctrine

Whether it be of God
Or whether I speak of myself.'

On this basis He asked that He might be judged :

'Judge not according to the appearance
But judge just judgement.'

With this preparation, appealing to their inner knowledge, to the witness of their secret hearts, to their conformity to God, to their sense of justice, He made His first formal declaration :

'You both know me
And you know whence I am
And I am not come of myself
But he that sent me is true
Whom you know not
I know him
Because I am from him
And he hath sent me.'

At once, as was to be expected, the declaration had its effect. Men took sides, a party against Him, a party for Him ; the former supported by the learning of the Pharisees, the latter by the simple witness of Jesus Himself, and by the confirmation of His miracles.

He waited till the last day of the Feast. On that day He made His second great declaration. In language which no one steeped in the prophets could possibly misunderstand, He now claimed for Himself a first fulfilment of that which was contained in the concept of the Messias. Characteristically He makes His claim in no aggressive way ; His form is that of winning appeal.

'If any man thirst
Let him come to me
And drink
He that believeth in me
As the Scripture saith
Out of his belly
Shall flow rivers of living water.'

Such a claim, of necessity, carried the controversy further. Before it had been a simple question of His credibility ; now He must either be accepted as a prophet or not, perhaps even as the Christ Himself. Again there was a cleavage ; again one side, shirking all argument, relied upon the power behind the Pharisees and all it represented, while the other took the simple witness of Jesus Christ Himself.

'Never did man speak
Like this man.'

A third declaration followed, once more firm and clear in its significance. He was the Messias, yes; but the Messias would reach beyond the scope of Judaism. He made this tremendous claim; yet in language that lost nothing of its old attractiveness.

'I am the light of the world
He that followeth me
Walketh not in darkness
But shall have the light of life.'

Hitherto He had spoken only to the people; at this point the Pharisees themselves come into the arena. Their method was the old one, used from the beginning. Before they would hear a word from Him they must ask Him for His credentials. He gave them, He gave His witnesses; later, when they would take neither, He appealed again to that fundamental argument, the unanswerable truth of Himself.

'If I say the truth
You believe me not
Which of you shall convince me of sin?
If I say the truth to you
Why do you not believe me?
He that is of God
Heareth the words of God
Therefore you hear them not
Because you are not of God.'

He was true and He had proved it. He had given testimony of Himself, and that testimony was therefore also true. His Father gave testimony of Him; He was the second witness; and since none could know the Father but the Son, and none could know the Son but the Father, no other witnesses were possible. So He argued with them, so He yielded to their prejudice; we marvel at this humility of the Son of God, submitting to the terms of this biased human court.

The truth of the Man that court could not deny. But it could ask further questions. And Jesus further answered;

in answering He made His fourth declaration, the most sublime of all.

‘They said therefore to Him
Who art thou?
Jesus said to them
The beginning
Who also speak to you
Many things I have to speak
And to judge of you
But he that sent me is true
And the things I have heard of him
These same I speak in the world.’

More than that. They had asked Him more than once, not only for a witness, but also for a sign. Already twice He had given it to them; the same sign, though hidden in a figure. Once it had been in the figure of the Temple:

‘Destroy this temple
And in three days
I will build it up again.’

The second time it had been under the figure of a prophet.

‘A wicked and adulterous generation
Asketh for a sign
And a sign shall not be given it
But the sign of Jonas the prophet.’

Now He would repeat the same. And this time He would be yet more explicit, even though, to eyes which would not see, He would remain more unintelligible than ever.

‘When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man
Then you shall know
That I am he
And that I do nothing of myself
But as the Father hath taught me
These things I speak
And he that sent me is with me
And he hath not left me alone
For I do always the things that please him.’

He had given His credentials; He had produced His witnesses; He had pointed out the sign. Though without the light of faith none of these could be clearly understood, yet there was a certainty in His manner which was convincing to those who willed to be convinced. More than ever, therefore, were the camps now divided. More than ever were some impelled to stand by Him, and to look to Him for light, and encouragement, and grace ; more than ever, on the other side, did the enemy stand on their prerogative. To the former He spoke words of welcome :

'If you continue in my word
You shall be my disciples indeed
And you shall know the truth
And the truth shall make you free.'

To the latter He was unflinching ; unflinching, yet did He never cease to invite :

'Amen, amen I say unto you
That whosoever committeth sin
Is the servant of sin
Now the servant abideth not in the house for ever
But the son abideth for ever
If therefore the son shall make you free
You shall be free indeed.'

Further controversy ; further cavilling and complaint ; yet at every step He has more to teach them, and that with an emphasis at once defiant and persuasive. Thus, did they claim God for their Father ?

'Jesus said to them
If God were your Father
You would indeed love me
For from God I proceeded
And came
For I came not of myself
But he sent me.'

Did they accuse Him of being a Samaritan, of having a devil ?

'Amen, amen I say to you
If any man keep my word
He shall not see death
For ever.'

Did they quote against Him their first father Abraham ?

'Abraham your father
Rejoiced that he might see my day
He saw it
And was glad.'

Did they deny that this was possible?

> 'Amen, amen I say to you
> Before Abraham was made
> I am.'

'I am!' 'Yahve!' It was terrific. This Man of Nazareth had before 'made Himself equal to God'; now He dared to apply to Himself that one name which it was forbidden to a Jew so much as to pronounce. What could it mean? A month or so before, Simon Peter had boldly declared it, but he had been bidden not to speak it openly. In Galilee Jesus had never gone so far as this; only here in Jerusalem, where men already knew much, and where for two years they had been pondering, only here, thanks to their own contradictions, the declaration was forced upon them. And some believed, not understanding, as indeed no man can ever understand; as for the rest, there was only one means of self-defence.

> 'They took up stones therefore
> To cast at him.'

If they might not stone the woman taken in adultery, they might at least stone Jesus Christ; if He could save others, Himself, perhaps, He could not save.

And yet for the moment He must. His hour was not yet come, though it was fast approaching. Moreover not in this way would He die. His death, when it took place, must be by a means more shameful than this, and on that account more glorious; more official, and therefore more unjust; more criminal, and therefore more like a king; more universally must He be rejected and therefore would He draw all things to Himself. When stones were raised, He slipped from them behind a portico; they thronged after Him, but He was gone.

> 'But Jesus hid himself
> And went out of the temple';

and even His enemies were relieved that His blood was still not upon them.

CHAPTER XXV

76. The Man Born Blind

JESUS went out of the Temple, but He did not hide for long ; the time was short and He had much else to do. He would not have escaped by the public Golden Gate, which led out into the valley of Kedron ; rather He would have gone by one of the gates behind the Sanctuary, which led into the heart of the city. Up to these exits He could have been hidden from the crowd by the buildings and porticoes around the Holy of Holies ; once outside, among the streets of the bazaar, He was comparatively secure. He passed down the deep-lying street beneath the Temple wall, a few disciples with Him. As He rounded a corner, a blind man was seated there begging ; such a sight was and is common. But in Jerusalem this beggar was specially well known. He had been blind from infancy, he had begged from childhood ; he possessed a certain coolness, an emphasis, an independence and originality, cultivated in him by the years devoted to his trade.

As the group passed the beggar, the companions of Jesus noticed him. Here at once let us observe something remarkable and significant. Had they met with such a man in Galilee, can it be doubted what would have been done ? He would have been brought to the feet of the Worker of miracles, and his healing would have been expected as a matter of course. In Jerusalem it is not so. There is no hint of miracles ; the sight of the man stirs among them a theological discussion and no more. Thus is confirmed what has been said before. Miracles in Jerusalem were very rare indeed, so far as we know, hitherto confined to only one.

And the discussion ? Something entirely theoretical ; something quite in the manner of the Jews of Jerusalem, utterly alien to the Galilæan mind. The man was blind ; therefore he was being punished for some evil done. But Moses had said that God visited the iniquities of parents on the children; therefore this man might be suffering, not for his own sins, but for the sins of his forefathers. It would be an interesting test question to put to Jesus. He had saved a fallen woman that morning by declining to pass sentence upon her; this time He would not be openly asked to pass sentence. Still, since He claimed the power to pardon sins, He must also claim to know who was, and who was not, a sinner.

They stood about the man. They drew the attention of Jesus to him. They said nothing of his misery, there was no pity in their words, no shadow of appeal, only the spirit of

'An eye for an eye
And a tooth for a tooth.'

With cold philosophy they asked Him:

'Rabbi
Who hath sinned
This man or his parents
That he should be born blind?'

Again Jesus seized the occasion offered to him. During all this week He had laboured, battling as never before against the storm of opposition. He had just given to the world the sublimest truth of His teaching; He would now do something to confirm the faith of those who were disposed to believe. But before He did so He would remind them of the two matters He had spoken of that day which He would have them not forget. He was the Messenger of God; He was the Light of the world. What He would do now would be a confirmation of these solemn truths.

'Jesus answered
Neither hath this man sinned
Nor his parents
But that the works of God
Should be made manifest in him
I must work the works of him that sent me
While it is day
The night cometh
When no man can work
As long as I am in the world
I am the light of the world.'

Nevertheless not at once did He heal him. It was not now as it had been with the beggar at the Pool in the early days ; then a word had been enough and the whole man was cured. The last case of healing of this kind had been at Bethsaida beyond Jordan ; there it had seemed He had done it with difficulty, rubbing the blind man's eyes with spittle and restoring sight only by degrees. In Decapolis, again, before that day, He had seemed to have trouble in healing a deaf mute, putting spittle on his tongue, and His fingers in his ears. Here, too, He appeared to have trouble. He stood before the beggar. He stooped down to the ground and spat upon it. With His fingers He mixed earth with the spittle into paste. He collected a little of this into the palm of His hand. Then He came close to the ragged blind man, where he sat with his metal pot and tiny castanets, and smeared the clay upon his eyes.

'When he had said these things
He spat upon the ground
And made clay of the spittle
And spread the clay upon his eyes.'

Still, with all this ceremony, there was no sign of a miracle. The man had now his own part to play.

'And he said to him
Go
Wash in the pool of Siloe
(Which is interpreted Sent).'

From which we may gather, since the pool of Siloe is on the south-eastern slope of the height on which Jerusalem stands, that the meeting took place in the south-eastern portion of the city, probably at the gate below the lofty southern Temple wall.

The poor man heard and did as he was told ; once more there was that in the tone of the Master which compelled obedience and confidence. He scrambled to his feet ; he put out his hands to feel the way. There were many ready to guide him, taking him by both arms, leading him out by the southern gate, along the city wall and down the slope of Ophel to the pool. With noise and clamour, talking all to one another and regardless whether anyone heard, they took him down the flight of steps to the water. There he washed the clay from his eyes. When he opened them, for the first time in his life light came into them and he knew what it was to see. In the city of Jerusalem a second wonder had been wrought; or rather not within the city but outside its walls.

Meanwhile Jesus had passed away across that valley to His temporary home on Olivet. For the moment He was of no concern; the excitement of the crowd was all turned upon the man who had been cured. He came back to his squalid home. As we have seen, he was well known to many, a character in those streets. Neighbours living round him had long been used to the blind beggar, who went every morning to his post for alms, and returned at evening to make the best of what had been given him. But what was this? The beggar they knew was no longer at his post; he was at home, learning to make use of his eyes. Could he be the same? Some said he must be; others said it was impossible. However like to the man they knew, he could not be the same. For the man they knew was blind and this man saw; therefore he must be another.

'The neighbours therefore
And they who had seen him before
That he was a beggar
Said, Is not this he that sat and begged?
Some said
This is he
But others said
No, but he is like him.'

Here again let us notice the difference in mind between Jerusalem and Galilee. In Galilee we have never had a single case of a miracle being denied. Men may have made little or nothing of them; they may have attributed to Jesus some peculiar healing power; they may have complained that He worked them on the Sabbath; they may have attributed them to the devil's aid; but the fact of the miracles themselves they did not deny. Here in Jerusalem, with the evidence before their eyes, their wisdom, their prudence, their knowledge, their science, convinced them it could not be, and therefore it was not. Miracles were outside their horizon.

Still there was the fact to be faced, and one way or another to be explained; and the only means by which this could be done was to interview the man himself. This was not a welcome task, for his evidence might prove awkward; on the other hand he was no more than an ignorant beggar, and in presence of science would no doubt be overawed. At least he could be cross-examined ; he could be made to contradict himself ; his story could be torn to shreds, so that no man of reason need accept it. In this mind the critics came to him. They questioned him : Was he the beggar, or was he not ? How could he be the blind man seeing he could use his eyes ?

But to all these questions there was only one response. The man might be ignorant, he might be stupid, but his very stupidity helped him. It made him obstinately cling to the one and only thing he knew.

' But he said
I am he.'

The fact could no longer be escaped ; he was the man and no other ; explain it as they might, he had once been blind and now he saw. Some other subterfuge must be found. They must make him tell his tale ; in the telling of it some weak link would be discovered, something which could be shown not to tally with the facts. No man ever told a story accurately.

' They said therefore to him
How were thy eyes opened ? '

But the beggar was not to be drawn too far from his defence. He had no imagination ; to him a spade was a spade ; both now and afterwards he showed the same colourless, fearless, obstinate clinging to the simple fact. He had been a helpless beggar long enough to be no longer in fear of any man.

' He answered
The man that is called Jesus
Made clay
And anointed my eyes
And said to me
Go to the pool of Siloe
And wash
And I went
And washed
And I see.'

Again they had failed, for they could draw no other answer. They must find some way of escape. They had said he was not the man, and he was. They had said this could be no miracle, and apparently it was. There remained one further defence; they could attack the person of Jesus Himself. They could affect to ignore Him; so much could they pretend to contemn Him that they did not even know His name.

'That man that is called Jesus!'

If a beggar in the street could so speak of Him, a beggar who owed Him so much, with how much greater assurance could they pass Him by! With a curl of contempt on the lip,

'They said to him
Where is he?'

And with not a little independent scorn the beggar gave them their answer:

'He saith
I know not.'

Thus in this hovel the conversation went on and came to no conclusion. But yes, there was one. Evidently this was a case for the authorities of the Temple to try. If this fraud were not exposed in time, or at least if it were not silenced, who knows what harm the rumour of it might not do? It was the Sabbath day. They knew exactly where, on that day and at that moment, the gathering of the Pharisees would be. They would take the man to them and learn how they would solve the problem.

'They bring him that had been blind
To the Pharisees
Now it was the Sabbath day
When Jesus made the clay
And opened his eyes.'

It was a pompous gathering. Solemnly in all their consequence these Pharisees sat round in judgement. This was indeed a novel matter about which they were asked to pass sentence. Only one case of the kind had they had before, and that had not been brought to them in this formal way. But on what were they to give judgement? On the man? On the miracle? On Him who had worked it? One thing at least in their hearts was certain, in the end it must be upon the last; and since at any cost He must be condemned, the man and his miracle must also be scorned.

The evidence accordingly was given. Out of it one thing was clear; here before them was a man who till that morning had been blind from birth and yet now could see. Obviously the question was: How had that come about? Learnedly they looked at one another. It was a simple matter, simpler here than in Galilee. Let the beggar tell his own tale, and they would supply the explanation.

'Again therefore the Pharisees asked him
How he had received his sight.'

But once more even the learned Pharisees were beaten. The obstinacy of the beggar-man was not to be broken down. He would say just what he had to say, neither more nor less; he had no use for subtleties or explanations.

'But he said
He put clay upon my eyes
And I washed
And see.'

Their cross-examination was of no avail. Here was a plain fact, admitting no escape. The questioners could go no further; they were again where they had begun. Of the man before them, and the miracle that had been done upon him, there could be no further doubt; there remained for them only to discuss once more the Man who had done this thing. Here at least there was the old way of escape. He had done it, call it what men liked, upon the Sabbath day; those who had shadowed Him in Galilee had long since learnt the value of this argument.

'Some therefore of the Pharisees said
This man is not of God
Who keepeth not the sabbath.'

Some of them said it, not all. For to others it was becoming clear that this argument was no longer as cogent as it had been; it had been used too often. It was recalled how, on His first appearance in Jerusalem, He had worked a miracle on the Sabbath and had defied them. Again and again in Galilee He had done the same; and when remonstrance had been made He had merely replied that He was

'Lord
Even of the sabbath.'

If on this ground He ought to be condemned, sentence ought to have been given long before. But, in addition, this was no facing of the fact; Sabbath or no Sabbath a miracle had indeed been worked. It was there before their eyes; it was only one of many which could no longer be denied. A Man who did such things could not be ignored; He should at least be studied. Their own teaching concerning God and His Providence showed them that such a Man could be no deceiver.

'But others said
How can a man that is a sinner
Do such miracles?
And there was a division among them.'

Thus did the trial come to an *impasse*. The man could not be condemned, for he evidently spoke the simple truth. The miracle could not be denied; its result was there, manifest before them. The Worker of the miracle was one to be feared, even if He was not to be believed. They looked, these cautious, 'prudent' Pharisees, at the beggar who stood in their midst. He was certainly plain-spoken, however ignorant. They would repeat their questions; they would cross-examine him again; soon he would say something which would not agree with what he had said in the first instance.

'They say therefore to the blind man again
What sayest thou
Of him that hath opened thy eyes?'

But even from this they could get no satisfaction; the man was utterly fearless and plain.

'But he said
He is a prophet.'

More and more did it grow evident that following this course would lead to nothing. They must try another. They must see whether other witnesses could not be produced, who would be more yielding to their influence. For instance, there were the man's parents. Yes, they were still alive; they lived within the city; poor folk who were hard put to it that they might earn their daily bread. They alone could give the true facts concerning the man's birth; perhaps from their account it could be shown that the miracle was after all only a case of recovery from some passing disease. Let them be sent for; meanwhile a prudent man could only suspend his judgement.

'The Jews then did not believe concerning him
That he had been blind
And had received his sight
Until they called the parents
Of him that had received his sight
And asked them saying
Is this your son
Who you say was born blind
How then doth he now see?'

In fear and trembling the poor old couple came before this grand assembly. They were not used to such gatherings; their place was in the streets, scavenging and begging. Moreover they were much alarmed at all that might follow from this cross-examination. Already it had been brought home to them that they must be careful what they said in regard to their son's Benefactor. In the bazaar they had heard it often whispered that the authorities were against Him; to be found on His side would incur their displeasure, and where might not that end? Naturally they would have wished to stand by Him; naturally, if all were as it should be, they would have sounded His praises. But they were poor people; they had their daily bread to earn, hard enough at the best of times. To declare for Him on whatever plea was to be against the powers; to be against the powers was to be ejected from the synagogue; to be ejected from the synagogue was to become an outcast; to be outcast was to make it virtually impossible to gain a livelihood at all. They must answer warily; they must not commit themselves; they must rely on their son to protect them. With all his blindness he had an abundance of wit, or so they interpreted his boldness. In the answer they gave, clinging closely to the bare fact as they knew it, and committing themselves to nothing more, one sees in these two not unworthy parents of such a son.

'His parents answered them and said
We know that this is our son
And that he was born blind
But how he now seeth
We knew not
Ask himself

He is of age
Let him speak for himself
These things his parents said
Because they feared the Jews
For the Jews had already agreed among themselves
That if any man should confess him to be Christ
He should be put out of the synagogue
Therefore did his parents say
He is of age
Ask himself.'

Thus once more were these solemn and enlightened judges prevented from drawing the conclusion they desired. The truth was in itself obstinate ; in the mouths of the poor and ignorant it was more obstinate still. Again they talked the matter over among themselves. There was yet another course. It was the course of a weak cause, a course very common, which from this time these Pharisees would use more and more ; a vulgar course, demeaning those who used it, and commonly stigmatized as 'bluff'. They were the guardians of the law ; they were the children of God. According to their office it was for them to know who was good and who was bad, who was right and who was wrong. Common people, such as beggars in the bazaar, had no right to a judgement of their own ; they should abide by the decisions of their betters. Only a day or two ago they had expressed their feelings clearly enough when they had said in their assembly :

'The multitude
That knoweth not the law
Are accursed.'

They would call in the man again. They would overawe him. His parents had evidently been frightened, so in time would he be. They would pour out upon him all their sanctity, all their sense of righteousness, all their wisdom and experience, and thus would gain their end.

'They therefore called the man again
That had been blind
And said to him
Give glory to God
We know that this man is a sinner.'

Was this a cruel attempt to retaliate, behind His back, on Jesus? He had challenged them to do it to His face. In the morning they had brought to Him a sinful woman for judgement; He had defended her by the simple words:

'He that is without sin among you
Let him first cast a stone at her.'

This had been stinging shame enough; but in the course of the day He had gone further. Before the people, here in this very Temple, He had said:

'You are from beneath
I am from above
You are of this world
I am not of this world
Therefore I said to you
That you shall die in your sins
For if you believe not
That I am he
You shall die in your sin.'

Here in this very Temple He had challenged them:

'If I say the truth
You believe me not
Which of you shall convince me of sin?
If I say the truth to you
Why do you not believe me?
He that is of God
Heareth the words of God
Therefore you hear them not
Because you are not of God.'

When the healed man had been brought to them, they were still smarting under the torture of that lash.

Yet did their venom avail nothing. The man remained obstinately true to what he had already said, true to the Man who had healed him; he would be cowed into saying nothing else.

'He said therefore to them
If he be a sinner
I know not
One thing I know
That whereas I was blind
I now see.'

Again they were thrown back to the beginning. They had tried every means they knew and there was no escape;

they could only go again over the whole course. The cross-examination was renewed; even were it to be by mere exhaustion, by mere weary repetition, the man must yet be made to contradict himself.

'They said to him
What did he to thee?
How did he open thy eyes?'

But the man was growing tired of this constant repetition. What was more, the sense of awe in presence of this august assembly which he had at the beginning had gone; wrangling men do not command respect, still less do backbiters. His grovelling beggar's life had taught him not to make too much account of people in high places; now the little reverence he once possessed was turning to contempt. Besides he had a sense of humour. Many a merry passage he had had with passers-by at his street corner; the present temptation he could not resist. He would poke fun at these solemn gentlemen; he would invite them to follow him to Jesus.

'He answered them
I have told you already
And you have heard
Why would you hear it again?
Will you also become his disciples?'

This was too much for the said solemn gentlemen; like most of their kind their sense of humour was but small. Therefore, being taken seriously, the man's gibe touched them to the quick. Their sensitive natures, pricked further by their consciences, leapt back. They forgot their dignity, as they had already done once before, as they were to do again one day to their utter shame. They turned on their helpless victim; they abused him for his impertinence; for his insinuation they reviled him; because he had done no more than stand by and defend the Man who had given him his sight, they poured their indignation upon him. Thus did one injustice lead to another; from reviling Jesus the step to reviling His disciple is easy, even as from reviling the disciple it soon becomes easy to revile the Master.

'They reviled him therefore and said
Be thou his disciple
But we are the disciples of Moses

We know that God spoke to Moses
But as to this man
We know not from whence he is.'

It was a specious, high-sounding mode of self-defence; but alas for them, before their faces it had long since been challenged and exposed. On that other memorable time, when Jesus had fought with them in this same arena, He had concluded by forestalling this very subterfuge. He knew it would be used, and often; therefore from the first He had warned both friend and foe against it. On that occasion He had said:

'Think not
That I will accuse you to the Father
There is one that accuseth you
Moses
In whom you trust
But if you did believe Moses
You would perhaps believe me also
For he wrote of me
And if you do not believe his writings
How will you believe my word?'

And as for their second argument, that they knew not whence He was, that very morning they had been given light enough.

'If God were your Father
You would indeed love me
For from God I proceeded
And came
For I came not of myself
But he sent me.'

But the beggar, too, had his own answer for them. As for Moses, that was an argument too abstruse for him; these men knew and he did not. One thing he did know, and it was enough. He had been healed, and the Man called Jesus had healed him; and from this there was only one conclusion. He contained himself no longer. Indignant, contemptuous, shocked by the blindness which steadily refused to see,

'The man answered and said to them
Why herein is a wonderful thing
That you know not from whence he is
And he hath opened my eyes

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Now we know that God doth not hear sinners
But if a man be a servant of God
And doth his will
Him he heareth
From the beginning of the world
It hath not been heard
That any man hath opened the eyes of one born blind
Unless this man were of God
He could not do anything.'

Simple theology, theology that issued from the heart; yet to the haughty Pharisees it was impertinence indeed. The beggar had been brought in to be judged, and he was judging them. He had been brought in to be shown the deceit of his so-called miracle, and he was flaunting it before their eyes. He had been brought in that he might be taught the truth, and he was teaching them. This man, if such off-scouring of the streets deserved the name, this beggar, this blind beggar-man, whose very affliction from his birth, however now cured, proved him to be a child of sin! They could endure him no longer. Whether the problem had been solved or not, arrogance such as this was not to be borne. Here at last was their escape from their dilemma; they could be stirred with righteous indignation. In wrath they stood up from their seats. Again their passion got the better of them. They had failed to condemn either the man or his miracle; they could at least punish him for his want of due reverence to them.

'They answered and said to him
Thou wast wholly born in sin
And dost thou teach us?
And they cast him out.'

Out of a fisherman Jesus had made His first disciple. Out of a sinful Samaritan woman He had made His first apostle. His first missionary to heathen nations was a healed demoniac. Of another fisherman He had made the rock-foundation of His Church. Now out of this blind beggar in the streets of Jerusalem He made the model for all martyrs, the first man disgraced—if we except the Baptist, who stands in a place apart—for His name's sake.

'Blessed are ye when men shall hate you
And revile you
And persecute you
And shall separate you
And shall reproach you
And cast out your name as evil
And speak all that is evil against you
Untruly for my sake
For the Son of man's sake
Be glad in that day and rejoice
For behold your reward is very great in heaven
For according to these things
Did their fathers persecute the prophets
That were before you.'

But the story of the beggar of Jerusalem did not end there. Jesus being what He was, we are not surprised that here and now His witness to His name should be rewarded. He had rewarded many ere this, just for a little show of trust. He had never once refused a request made to Him. Publicly He had proclaimed and honoured the faith of a Roman soldier. He had said in gratitude of John the Baptist that he was a prophet and more than a prophet. He had poured out His love and favour on a woman who had but touched the hem of His garment. He had fed five thousand men because they had come into the desert to Him. For having first proclaimed Him Son of God He had exalted Simon. He was not one who would pass by the poorest outcast that had suffered for Him. He had promised such men joy; He would promise it again overwhelmingly; nay, He would promise His own more sorrow, just that they might have more joy. As He sat in His dwelling on the slope of Olivet, the news was brought to Him of the doings in the Temple. The man He had cured had been taken, as it were a thief; he had been tried, as it were for heresy. No evidence had been brought against him, yet had he been condemned; because he had been faithful to the Man who had healed him, he had been cast out.

Jesus said nothing. He rose from where He sat, went out towards the valley, crossed the brook Kedron, and fearlessly entered the city by the gate below the Temple. Near that gate, as we have seen, was the poor man's hovel; Jesus sought and soon found him. The man had not seen Him before, but he knew of Him, this

'Man that is called Jesus',

and he had experienced His favour as had no other. In the interval, though only of a day, his mind and understanding had grown. He had listened to the wrangling around him; he had been asked many questions. He had been filled with his own thoughts; above all he had been faithful to each new light that had been given him, and fidelity had led on to more and more. He was one more example, we have already seen others, of the steady growth that follows response in the knowledge of Jesus. First it had been no more than

'The man that is called Jesus.'

Then it had been:

'He is a prophet.'

Next:

'One thing I know
That whereas I was blind
Now I see.'

Afterwards:

'Will you also become his disciples?'

Until he had reached the conclusion:

'Unless this man were of God
He could not do anything.'

While he is thinking these things, while faith and gratitude grow to overflowing in him, while love for this Man unknown wells out in unlimited trust, and trust in return increases faith and love, Jesus Himself comes and stands before him. It is his Benefactor; it is 'the Man that is called Jesus'; if at first he did not know, his friends do not leave him long in doubt. What a further condescension! Not only had this great Man healed him, healed him all undeserving; He had now gone further, He had come and sought him out, He had spent His time in searching for such a one as himself. From the look in His eyes it was clear that He was a friend, and that He asked him for his friendship. They looked at one another, they loved one another; there was an equality between them, between this working man of Nazareth and this beggar of Jerusalem. Now he was glad that he had been cast out because he had done Him honour!

For a moment they said nothing. They understood too much, they felt too much, for words. Then at last Jesus spoke. He asked a question, a searching, longing question. Eagerly, as if that beggar-man's love were worth as much to Him as the love of all Jerusalem, He said :

‘ Dost thou believe
In the Son of God ? ’

Did he believe ? What would he not believe if this Man told him ? ‘ In the Son of God ? ’ What did that mean ? He did not know ; he did not try to know. One thing he did know ; he believed in this Man Jesus. Let Him only lead and he would follow. Let Him speak and he would accept every word. Let Him but say who was the Son of God, and he would require no further proof.

‘ He answered and said
Who is he
Lord
That I may believe in him ? ’

The rest came quickly. For a moment there was silence. Jesus waited ; the man longed more and more. Then gently, attractively, letting the full joy of it sink into the beggar's heart,

‘ Jesus saith to him
Thou hast both seen him
And it is he
That talketh with thee.’

At once the man understood. He saw ; that ‘ faith which is more certain than reason ’ let him see. If the day before the eyes of his body had been opened, now he saw with his whole soul. There was not a moment's hesitation ; careless of all around him, reckless of all consequences, he sprang forward.

‘ I believe
Lord ’,

he said ;

‘ And falling down
He adored him.’

For a brief moment the heart of Jesus was glad.

But He did not delay ; there was other work to do. When He had come into the city that morning men had again gathered round and followed Him. Among these were sundry Pharisees, most of whom had their homes in that quarter. These now, here in Jerusalem, were beginning to dog His steps as they had dogged His steps in and about Capharnaum. To them He would now direct His chief attention. Before He had left them alone. In Galilee there was other work to do ; here in Jerusalem all was different. They had knowledge of this miracle ; they saw the man adoring at His feet ; He would turn the scene to a parable, a parable of warning. While the man still clung to Him, while all around stood looking on in awe, the eye of the Master searched the multitude. Then half threatening, half in tender appeal, that combination of opposites which marks all His words in Jerusalem, He said :

'For judgement I am come into the world
That they who see not
May see
And they who see
May become blind.'

It was not possible that they should miss His meaning. Often enough before He had thrown them back upon the prophets, and the prophets they knew.

'Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.'
Isaias xxxv, 5.

'Go and thou shalt say to this people
Hearing hear
And understand not
And see the vision
And know it not
Blind the heart of this people
And make their ears heavy
And shut their eyes
Lest they see with their eyes
And hear with their ears
And understand with their heart
And be converted
And I heal them.'
Isaias vi, 9.

They knew to whom He alluded. Yet was it shame to them to yield. They could not, they would not ; therefore must they show resentment and offence at what He said. With indignation, with something of contempt, they raised their voices.

‘And they said to him
Are we also blind?’

He treated them as they deserved, these men who thirsted for His blood, yet in their own city dared not touch Him.

‘Jesus said to them
If you were blind
You should not have sin
But now you say
We see
Your sin remaineth’;

and without another word He turned up the street into the town and left them.

77. The Good Shepherd

Before S. John concludes the account of this eventful Feast of Tabernacles, he has another episode to record which he would not care to have omitted. As in other places, so here, having ended what he at first had to say, he remembers this further incident and inserts it without introduction. Knowing as we do how Jesus makes use of His surroundings to illustrate His teaching, it might well be argued that what here follows was spoken outside the city. It was the latter part of autumn. The rainy season had not yet closed in, though it was fast approaching. The sheep were scattered over the bare hills, finding pasture where the Western eye can see only barren land; at night they gathered into the folds, walled enclosures with a single narrow entrance. Every evening the shepherd came and counted them, knowing them even by name; every morning he opened the door and led them out; during the night, in his hut alongside or in a hole in the mountain, he kept his silent watch, against thieves and against the beasts of the desert.

Or if the shepherd were of greater consequence, or if for security several combined, then would the flocks be brought together into one enclosure, and a man would be hired to tend them in the night within the door. And in the morning each shepherd would come up the hill-side from his village, pipe in hand. And he would know his own sheep, and they would know him ; and with his pipe he would call them, and they would rise to their feet and follow, each its own master, without confusion or mistake. And he would turn about and go forward and they would come after, to the place he would choose for that day's pasture ; leading them to the tune of his pipe, playing to them during the day, when there was need of change taking them further afield, at evening bringing them back again to their place of rest and safety. It was a common scene ; it is common enough to-day. In the peaceful East there are few pictures more peaceful than that of the shepherd and his sheep. The Middle East is essentially a land of shepherds.

Such a picture, of peace and quiet after storm, Jesus chooses as the closing episode of the troubled week of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. It had indeed been dark and trying, worse than anything He had undergone before, a harbinger of that still greater storm that in no long time was to break upon Him. All through the weary days He had fought on, but always with offers of peace held out to His enemies. If they would come to Him He would give them to drink, He would be their light, He would be their guide ; throughout all the combat the offer had unceasingly been made. And now that it was over, He would close on the same note. He came out of the city, and some of His friends came with Him. Up on the hill-side in front of them, with the evening sun casting its long shadows over all, one of these shepherd scenes was proceeding of which we have just spoken. With His love of peaceful nature He watched it ; simply He described it ; He would make it the theme of His farewell address.

' Amen, amen I say to you
He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold
But climbeth up another way
The same is a thief and a robber
But he that entereth in by the door
Is the shepherd of the sheep
To him the porter openeth
And the sheep hear his voice
And he calleth his own sheep by name
And leadeth them out
And when he hath let out his own sheep

He goeth before them
And the sheep follow him
Because they know his voice
But a stranger they follow not
But fly from him
Because they know not the voice of strangers
This proverb
Jesus spoke to them.'

The parable is told by John alone, and in his own characteristic way. More than the other Evangelists John reflects the extremes, the contrasts in Jesus ; the wrath and the love, the denunciations and the appeals, the strength and the gentleness, the sweeping vision and the attention to every detail, the arms opened wide to all and the care of each single individual, the agony of failure and the certainty of success, the eyes turned to heaven along a supernatural path and yet the observation of the little things of nature. More than the others, when he deems it worth while, he brings down his narrative so near to life and history that it cannot be taken for anything but fact ; he justifies his claim, that he tells only

'That which we have heard
Which we have seen with our eyes
Which we have looked upon
And our hands have handled.'

Hence in his choice of a parable he seizes on a living thing before him. It is not a story ; at first it seems to point no moral. It is just a simple description of a simple scene, taking place every day before their eyes, given in the very simplest language that human speech can find. And yet does it contain the very essence of all that is most sublime on the human side of Jesus ; more than any other image of Him, this of the shepherd and his sheep has clung to Him through all time.

Indeed so simple, so natural was the picture that for the moment those who heard Him saw no significance in what He said. He seemed to be enjoying the beauty of the pastoral lyric being enacted before His eyes. They knew His love for nature ; He had revelled in it often before ; after the turmoil of the city, what was more to be expected than that this Man, bred on the hill-sides of Galilee, should find relief in the peace of the shepherd's life ? But that was not His mind; His aim was deeper than that. He would apply what He had said; and in doing so, once more His words would awaken echoes from the prophetic past.

'But they understood not what he spoke to them. Jesus therefore said to them again: Amen, amen I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All others as many as have come are thieves and robbers; and the sheep heard them not. I am the door; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and he shall go in and go out, and find pastures. The thief cometh not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy; I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flieth, and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep. And the hireling flieth because he is a hireling and he hath no care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me. As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for my sheep. And other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. And I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of my Father.'

One fears to touch a portrait so delicate, drawn by our Lord's own hand. Let it stand alone, it is perfect; a more finished poem could not be written. Let us only try to emphasize its significance to those who heard it; for if to all the world it means so much, how much more must it have meant to them!

In the first place the claim itself could not but have brought up a long line of memories. He was the Shepherd; He was the Good Shepherd; then He claimed to be the fulfilment of a long series of types. For in the past how many forerunners of the Messias had been shepherds? Abel the shepherd, slain by his brother Cain; the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all of them shepherds; Joseph, the shepherd boy, sold into Egypt by his brothers; the Hebrews afterwards in Egypt the shepherds of the Great

King. Again Moses and Aaron were shepherds when they first heard the voice of God. David was a shepherd when the Lord chose him and anointed him king; the shepherd Judges, the shepherd prophets, all came into their minds. And Jesus was the Good Shepherd; He claimed to fulfil them all.

Then there was the imagery of Scripture. To speak of no other, how often had this model of a shepherd appeared in the Psalms and in the prophets!

'The Lord is my shepherd
And I shall want nothing
He hath set me in a place of pasture
He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment.'
Psalm xxii, 1, 2.

'We thy people
And the sheep of thy pasture
Will give thanks to thee for ever.'
Psalm lxxviii, 13.

'For he is the Lord our God
And we are the people of his pasture
And the sheep of his hand.'
Psalm xciv, 7.

'Know ye that the Lord he is God
He made us
And not we ourselves
We are his people
And the sheep of his pasture.'
Psalm xcix, 3.

As for the prophets, who could not recall the descriptions, familiar to them from their childhood?

'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd
He shall gather together the lambs with his arm
And shall take them up in his bosom
And he himself shall carry them that are with young.'
Isaias xl, 11.

Then there was the long prophecy of Ezechiel, of the sheep and the shepherds of Israel, with its culminating verse:

'And I will set up one shepherd over them
And he shall feed them

Even my servant David
He shall feed them
And he shall be their shepherd.'
Ezechiel xxxiv, 23 (all the ch.).

And again :

' And my servant David shall be king over them
And they shall have one shepherd
They shall walk in my judgements
And shall keep my commandments
And shall do them.'
Ezechiel xxxvii, 24.

There was the imagery of Micheas :

' Feed thy people with thy rod
The flock of thy inheritance
Them that dwell alone in the forest
In the midst of Carmel
They shall feed in Basan and Galaad
According to the days of old.'
Micheas vii, 14

There was Zacharias :

' The Lord of hosts hath visited his flock
The house of Juda
And hath made them
As the horse of his glory in battle.'
Zacharias x, 3.

Again when he spoke of the Passion :

' And they shall say to him
What are these wounds
In the midst of thy hands ?
And he shall say
With these was I wounded
In the house of them that loved me
Awake, O sword, against my shepherd
And against the man that cleaveth to me
Saith the Lord of hosts
Strike the shepherd
And the sheep shall be scattered
And I will turn my hand to the little ones.'
Zacharias xiii, 6, 7.

All this and more came before the minds of His hearers as Jesus unfolded to them the picture of the Good Shepherd. It was more than a poem, it was a claim to the fulfilment of prophecy, and that put in such a form as to be almost irresistible.

‘There shall be one fold
And one shepherd.’

Had His words ended there His hearers might have found nothing at which to cavil. But He went on; once more He began to speak about His death. He had spoken of the shepherd dying for his sheep, of Himself laying down His life for His own; now He spoke of His power to live as long as He chose, to die when He chose, and when dead to come to life again. It was utterly unintelligible. Already His disciples had discussed these strange words among themselves and had been able to come to no conclusion; how much less could they be understood by the people of Jerusalem gathered now about Him! To all they were a mystery, even to His dearest friends; when then those who would find fault with Him objected, they had nothing to reply, which encouraged His critics the more. With all His poetry He was not normal; like so many poets He was not in His right mind. In former days He had been called mad because of His neglect of Himself, now He was mad because He made of Himself too much. Indeed so much, that He spoke like one possessed. He could live as long as He liked? He could die when He liked? He could come to life again if He liked? God His Father had commanded Him to die in order that He might rise again? Loved Him the more because He had undertaken to do so? This was not folly, it was blasphemy; it was not ordinary madness, it was the madness of possession. Such a Man deserved no consideration whatsoever.

‘A dissension rose again among the Jews
For these words
And many of them said
He hath a devil
And is mad
Why fear you him?’

So common sense seemed to conclude. But there were others who were led by more than common sense. Say what men might, the event of the day before could not be so easily passed over. Before their eyes He had done that which no other man had ever done; which no man of himself could do; and He had done it as a confirmation of all the wonderful things He had said during the preceding week. The healed man was right when He had claimed that his Healer was a prophet, that He was a friend of God; was he unreasonable when he put in Him all his faith, and love, and trust, and called Him the Son of God? But if He was this, then might not His words have a true meaning, even though for the moment they could make nothing of them? They were not idle words, they were words uttered with authority; time might yet show that they were true.

'Others said
These are not the words
Of one that hath a devil
Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?'

CHAPTER XXVI

78. The Mission of the Seventy-two

JESUS passed away from Jerusalem, down the road by Jericho to the Jordan, up the valley through Percœa to favourite places by the Sea of Galilee. From this time it becomes very difficult to trace His movements. For the next few months, the five before His death, He moves from place to place, as if He would not court danger by remaining too long in one, and the Evangelists themselves seem to join in the conspiracy of silence, covering His footsteps wherever He goes. During this period they tell us of many events ; they give us some momentous discourses ; but when, or where, or under what circumstances, they seldom say.

Strikingly is this the case with the next event, told to us by S. Luke.

‘ And after these things
The Lord appointed also other seventy-two
And he sent them two and two
Before his face
Into every city and place
Whither he himself was to come.’

Who were these Seventy-two ? We are given no indication. From whom were they chosen ? We do not know. Where did the selection take place, and into what cities were they sent ? S. Luke gives us no hint, who alone records the fact. It is all in marked contrast with the choice and mission of the Twelve, set apart on the mountain overhanging Capharnaum, sent to preach in Galilee, and in Galilee alone, whose names are carefully given by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and whose mission is over before the paschal season of that year.

However, that the choice was not made in Jerusalem or Judæa, one might not unreasonably presume. In Jerusalem, as we have seen, He had fought single-handed.

There He would not that a single disciple should suffer by being too closely associated with Him. He went up to the city alone; during all the week of the festival not one follower is mentioned as being at His side; that the Seventy-two are sent

'Before his face
Into every city and place
Whither he himself was to come',

seems decidedly to exclude Judæa.

On the other hand, as soon as He had crossed the Jordan into Perœa, He would be rid of the harassing critics and questioners of Jerusalem. Instead, the nearer He approached the borders of Galilee, believers and admirers dwelling on the Jordan banks would again gather round Him. If Jerusalem rejected Him, Perœa did not; if Galilee had grown cold, Perœa, with its lesser lights, was still faithful. In the caravan of Galilæans returning with Him from the festival were many who called themselves His followers; others, as we have seen, had on the road joined their company. Out of these, willing, eager, proud to be chosen, He could easily form a little band of pioneers, who would 'make straight the path' for Him as He went along. There were seventy-two chosen; there were already twelve Apostles; one may conjecture that each Apostle was given six men to help him. These were divided into pairs. They were sent forward along the route to Galilee; they went through the surrounding towns and villages, telling the people that Jesus was coming that way. Their mission they would confirm by miracles, especially by the casting out of devils. They would gather the inhabitants together along the road, to see and hear the Master as He passed; when the expedition was over they would meet again on the border of the lake.

But here, before He dismisses them, He cannot keep from His vision the experience of His own preaching. He looks across the lake in the direction of Capharnaum, with Bethsaida to the south, and Corozain in the hills to the north; and at last His heart breaks out in complaint of the effect of His teaching in their streets. He had come to them with a double message; that the Kingdom was at hand, and that in order to receive it they should do penance. He had proved to them the Kingdom by such proof as had made them proclaim Him their King; but of the repentance that He looked for, the searching and amendment of heart, there was none. He had spoken to them words which had made them declare Him the Prophet ; yet the penance He had preached had been neglected. With all their enthusiasm and glamour these men of Galilee had remained very much where they were ; they were willing to have Him for their hero and leader, they were loath to humble their hearts before God. They would have all He would give them, they would give nothing in return. They had accepted His miracles ; as He had long since said, they had drawn from them no conclusion.

'Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein were done most of his miracles, for that they had not done penance. Woe to thee, Corozain ! Woe to thee, Bethsaida ! For if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable in Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgement than for you. And thou, Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted up to heaven ? Thou shalt go down even unto hell. For if in Sodom had been wrought the miracles that had been wrought in thee, perhaps it had remained unto this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgement than for thee. He that heareth you heareth me ; and he that despiseth you despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.'

The passage is important for many reasons. In the first place we have here confirmed an impression already derived from the sacred text. Jesus had taken up His abode in Capharnaum. In Capharnaum and its neighbour Bethsaida, He worked most of the miracles that we have recorded. He preached His great sermon, after calling the Apostles, on the hill-side not far from Corozain. Elsewhere, though miracles are by no means unknown, and at times are spoken of as if they were lavishly poured out, still they would seem to be at most intermittent. In and around Capharnaum they were continuous, whenever He was in the town. Now we are expressly told that in these places

'Were done the most of his miracles' ;

which, indirectly it is true, but nevertheless distinctly, helps us to believe, against some commentators that not very much of the essentials of the life of Jesus has been omitted from the Gospels, that when the four are put together we have a substantial whole.

Next is the emphasis laid by the text on the failure of these cities to do penance. What exactly does this mean? In the early days of this year complaints had been made to Jesus that while the disciples of both John the Baptist and the Pharisees fasted, His own disciples did not; and He had defended them on the ground that so long as the Bridegroom was present they might well rejoice. In the Sermon on the Mount, He had not spoken against penance; on the other hand He had emphatically condemned it as it was practised by the hypocrites in the streets and synagogues of Capharnaum. Once only had He spoken of its necessity; when at the foot of Thabor, after the Transfiguration, He had spoken of a certain kind of devil being cast out only by prayer and fasting.

At the Jordan, before His coming, John the Baptist insisted on penance in the shape of baptism and the confession of sins. When Jesus came and took up His place at the ford of the river, we are told that through His disciples He did the same. After the capture of John, when He formally opened His campaign in Galilee, we are told by S. Mark that

'Jesus came into Galilee
Preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God
And saying
The time is accomplished
And the kingdom of God is at hand
Repent
And believe the gospel.'

Thirdly there is the form of penance which Jesus mentions; it is a public thing, one familiar to the readers of the sacred books. Thus when the wicked king Achab was denounced and threatened by Elias we are told:

'And when Achab had heard these words
He rent his garments
And put haircloth upon his flesh
And fasted
And slept in sackcloth
And walked with his head cast down
And the word of the Lord came to Elias the Thesbite saying
Hast thou not seen Achab

Humbled before me?
Therefore because he hath humbled himself
For my sake
I will not bring the evil in his days.'
3 Kings xxi, 27–29.

Again after the Restoration from captivity, when once more Jerusalem, and the Temple, and the sacred books, and the great festivals were their own, then,

'In the four and twentieth day of the month
The children of Israel came together
With fasting and with sackcloth
And earth upon them
And the seed of the children of Israel
Separated themselves from every stranger
And they stood
And confessed their sins
And the iniquities of their fathers.'
2 Esdras ix, 1, 2.

Once more in Ninive, a pagan city, when the prophet Jonas preached in it and threatened it with doom for its wickedness,

'The men of Ninive believed in God
And they proclaimed a fast
And put on sackcloth
From the greatest to the least
And the word came to the king of Ninive
And he rose up out of his throne
And cast away his robe from him
And was clothed with sackcloth
And sat in ashes.'
Jonas iii, 5.

Pictures such as these could not but have risen up in the minds of His hearers as they listened to the words of their Master. Yet what of the kind had been seen, in Capharnaum, in Bethsaida, in Corozain, in any of the cities He had visited? What of the kind had even been expected? They understood quite well. Ninive might show its penance in sackcloth and ashes, but the penance of Corozain and Bethsaida should have gone deeper down. Often enough had Jesus told them that He wanted the truth of the inner man and that only, and to purify that truth an inner discipline was needed. And that He had not got; He had won lip-service and no more.

'These people honoureth me with their lips
But their heart is far from me.'

The penance of surrendering faith, the penance of generous love, the penance of blind trust, these were what He looked for, and received from only a few; as for the rest, since they clung to their own, to lift them higher was not possible.

'He that shall lose his life
For my sake
Shall find it.'

In the fourth place it is remarkable that He chooses Corozain and Bethsaida for special mention in His condemnation. Of Corozain we have not heard before, and shall never hear again; we have never been told that He once visited the place. If tradition and archæology be accurate, Corozain lay on the hill up behind Capharnaum; a few ruins now unearthed are believed to mark the site. But if this be correct, then it may easily be seen how the people of Corozain would have had ample opportunities of special favour. When Jesus went north from Capharnaum and the multitudes there gathered round Him, these from Corozain would have been the nearest to Him; the feeding of the five thousand further round the lake close by would have been particularly known to them. As for Bethsaida, it had given Him at least five Apostles; other followers, men and women, had come from it; but for the rest it had stood still. And to-day, while pagan Tiberias lower down the lake still stands and flourishes, of Bethsaida there is not a stone left to mark its site, of Corozain the remains can only be conjectured.

There was also Capharnaum; this He set apart in His sentence. He had cured the son of its governor; He had healed the servant of one of its chief military officers; the daughter of a ruler of its synagogue He had raised to life. In Capharnaum He had made His home; He had called it His own city; whenever He had worn Himself out with His journeys He had always returned there to rest. Here He had gradually revealed Himself, first on the Sabbaths in the synagogues, then in its streets, until on the mountain overhanging it He had delivered to them the New Law.

Afterwards He had gone forward again and here, in Capharnaum, in its synagogue, when its people had most professed to believe in Him, He had offered them the Bread of Life. Here He had first commanded devils ; here He had first forgiven sins ; here He had gone down the streets and healed without reserve every sick case presented to Him. The town was full of memories of His familiarity, of His favour, of His abiding patience, of His love, of His power, of His teaching, of His invitations, of His warnings, of His condescension, of His trust.

And yet with what result ? Capharnaum was holding up its head. If Jesus was anything, then He might one day be a king ; if He were to be a king, then already had He chosen Capharnaum for His capital. There was a great future before it ; even now, because of Him, there were many comings and goings in the place. So paltry, so despicable, so grovelling, had been the fruit of Jesus' love for Capharnaum! The contrast which He makes is terrific. For Corozain and Bethsaida He had been content to set in opposition Tyre and Sidon, the pagan cities by the sea which they knew, with which they regularly traded, whose country-side He Himself had visited. When He speaks of Capharnaum He invokes a name that is to every Jew a standing symbol of every kind of human wickedness and horror and doom. Capharnaum would lift itself to heaven ? It shall go down to hell. It would call itself the blessed city ? It shall be more cursed than Sodom. Let posterity now judge what sin in the mind of Jesus is the greatest that man can commit. On another occasion He had said :

' Amen I say to you
That all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men
And the blasphemies wherewith they shall blaspheme
And whosoever shall speak a word
Against the Son of Man
It shall be forgiven him
But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit
Shall never have forgiveness
Neither in this world
Nor in the world to come
But shall be guilty of an everlasting sin
Because they said
He hath an unclean spirit.'

Thus in all this scene, insignificant in itself as it may appear, we are again brought face to face with the overwhelming paradox of Jesus. From the time He left Galilee for Jerusalem to this point the light and shadow have been continually falling on Him. The strongest of men yet treated as the weakest; the most commanding yet the most submissive; the most severe yet the most considerate; the most friendly yet the most exclusive; the most fiery yet the most gentle; the most assertive yet the meekest; the most defiant yet the most yielding; the most intolerant of sin yet the lover of sinners; the most jealous for His good name yet bearing with those who took it from Him; the most sanguine yet the most patient; the most vehement yet the most enduring; the most confident yet the most disappointed; the most triumphantly sure yet the greatest failure. We might prolong the contrast indefinitely, nor would it be wasted time to do so; for the paradox, in Him, implies no contradiction, it is essential to His portrait. By its means, and probably by it only, can we explain His acceptance and rejection at once, in the same streets, under the same circumstances, sometimes it would seem even by the same people. On the one side is the evidence that He is all that He claims to be, evidence that cannot be gainsaid; on the other side, evidence, as it is deemed, that He cannot be, and therefore is not. Between the two unaided reason hesitates, faith and love alone can decide; without faith and love, as He emphasizes more than once, there is no hope that He should be discovered. This is the key to the mystery of Capharnaum, as well as to the mystery of Jerusalem; it is the key to the mystery in every place and time.

'This child
Is set for the resurrection
And for the fall
Of many in Israel.'

79. The Return of the Seventy-two

It appears that during all this time Jesus stayed in the district of Percæa, now moving off from the main high road, now clinging round the scenes of His first revelation by the Jordan. Throughout there is no mention of Galilee, and that He was no longer in Jerusalem is evident; on the other hand, what hints we are given as to the locality, as well as the subject matter of His words, all seem to point to the eastern hill country of Judæa, between Jerusalem and Jordan. Nor is it unlikely. Galilee has had its day, and has received from Him His all; the condemnation we have just heard would imply that its hour is ended. He will visit it again but only by way of a visit; Capharnaum and the Lake of Galilee have now definitely ceased to be His home.

Instead, for these last months of His life, He definitely concentrates upon Jerusalem. That He may do this He must keep within its neighbourhood. In the city itself He cannot safely stay; even Judæa, if He tarries long in any place, is dangerous; for anything approaching to a permanent home He must go beyond the Jordan. Here He has associates, less enthusiastic, perhaps, than had been the Galilæans, but more inclined to give Him shelter. Among these people the memory of the Baptist was still fresh; among them, too, by reason of the careless rule of Herod, the danger from Judæan Pharisees and Scribes was less imminent. In Perœa He was comparatively secure, for a while at least; among its people His disciples were willingly received; from it, when occasion demanded, He could at any time pass over into Judæa.

The Seventy-two went their way. They did their work as He had commanded them, and returned. They went two and two; they preached the Kingdom in places which had not yet heard the word. As He had told them they would, they worked miracles; to their own astonishment they cast out devils. And it was all so easy; it had been needful only to call upon His name, to act in His name, and the work was done. They came back full of their achievement. They compared their experiences, one with another. They gathered about Him and related to Him how well they had done.

'And the seventy-two returned
With joy saying
Lord
The devils also are subject to us
In thy name.'

He welcomed them; He was glad that they were glad, even as in the Galilæan days, when the Twelve had returned to Him happy from their first adventure Then He had received them one by one, and had proposed to them a rest along with Him ; now He received His disciples in a group, and gave them a general warning. Let them rejoice in their success, but let them beware of making too much of it. Let them realize the power He had given them, but let them not forget that there were other greater things in which they should glory.

> ‘ And he said to them
> I have seen Satan
> Like lightning fall from heaven
> Behold I have given you power
> To tread upon serpents and scorpions
> And upon all the power of the enemy
> And nothing shall hurt you
> But yet rejoice not in this
> That spirits are subject to you
> But rejoice in this
> That your names are written in heaven.’

Their names were written in heaven! This last sentence proved that His warning was given in a happy strain. It was not as others of His warnings, which ended in a threat of doom. They were His children, His little children, rejoicing in this new power bestowed upon them as if it were some new toy. They were easily carried away ; they easily mistook success for things that were more excellent. But in all their littleness He had trusted them, and He would not take the trust back ; on the contrary, they should be His consolation. If Corozain, and Bethsaida, and Capharnaum had failed Him, these at least had followed ; if Jerusalem had cast Him out, these had welcomed Him. If wise and prudent men like the Pharisees and Scribes had remained in their blindness, these had received the light and had done what they could to spread it. They should be His consolation ; they should become sons of God. Here was something for which He could thank the Father ; here were men to whom He could give the assurance of Himself, which would carry them on, in spite of their littleness, to dare great things indeed. He was at peace ; He was content ; in spite of the rejection all around Him, in these few He rejoiced. His heart warmed towards them, His eyes turned to heaven. Before them all He broke into prayer, a simple prayer of thanksgiving.

‘ In that same hour
Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Ghost
And answered and said
I confess to thee
O Father
Lord of heaven and earth
Because thou hast hid these things
From the wise and prudent
And hast revealed them
To little ones
Yea, Father
For so it hath seemed good in thy sight.’

Then He turned to them with an assurance, an encouragement, a welcome, which has rung down the ages from His time until now, and will ring on through all eternity. When we realize that this is the reaction from the ‘ Woe ’ pronounced on Corozain, and Bethsaida, and Capharnaum, we see another instance of the compelling paradox of Jesus.

‘ All things are delivered to me
By my Father
And no one knoweth who the Son is
But the Father
Neither doth anyone know the Father
But the Son
And he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him
Come to me
All you that labour
And are burdened
And I will refresh you
Take up my yoke upon you
And learn of me
Because I am meek
And humble of heart
And you shall find rest to your souls
For my yoke is sweet
And my burden light.’

It was a spontaneous outburst, forced from Him as it were by what had gone before, and by what He knew was soon to follow ; the moment of joy was an oasis in a wilderness. But He did not dwell there long. He recovered

Himself, and turning again to those about Him He concluded :

‘ Blessed are the eyes which see
The things which you see
For I say to you
That many prophets and kings have desired
To see the things which you see
And have not seen them
And to hear the things that you hear
And have not heard them.’

We may well look back upon this scene, for few reveal in so little space so much of the mind and character of Jesus. He had chosen seventy-two of His less-trained disciples. He had placed in them an overwhelming trust, no less than that of announcing Himself and His Kingdom to strangers. He had given them powers but little short of those which He had given before to the Twelve. They had gone forth, according to His bidding ; we hear no more about them until they return elated with their success. When they make their report, they seem to forget the chief object of their mission, they say nothing of the way they have been received and heard, they can speak only of the wonderful fact that by the mere use of His name they have been able to cast out devils. He receives them with patience ; He listens to them with forbearance ; we can see the quiet welcome in His face that can draw these men to speak to Him so unconcernedly. He is less moved by the tales of their conquests than when the Twelve came back to Him happy men. Instead, He can only give them warning ; let them beware, greater wonder-workers than they have ere this fallen and perished.

From that beginning He has gone on to speak of the miracles themselves. Yes, He has given them power to work miracles ; more than that, He has made them immune from all kinds of dangers and enemies. They need not fear, He says to them, they shall not come to any harm from any power on earth. Still, let them not be too confident on that score. Let them not rejoice too much in their guaranteed security ; let them not make too much of their power over serpents, over scorpions, even over evil spirits. Let them remember that they live on an entirely different plane, on which all these are of little moment. They are now a chosen people indeed ; they are members of the Kingdom ; their names are inscribed on the roll of its citizens ; we follow the wisdom of Jesus as He looks through the things of time along the perspective of eternity, as He pierces the shell of matter to measure human worth by its spirit. Because of that He can give them His assurance, not because of what they have done ; because of that He trusts them ; because of that He has given them power to do what He has commissioned them to do, and it shall have its effect in eternity. Yes, good works are a subject for rejoicing ; yet it is the faith, the motive, the ideal, the soul, the nobler vision behind them that make them of any worth.

Thus, while He begins soberly and with warning, still He ends these first words on a note of encouragement and congratulation ; with those who work for Him He always has encouragement, no matter what the issue of their work may be.

‘ Rejoice in this
That your names are written
In heaven.’

This gives Him cause for rejoicing, too.

‘ Unless you become as little children,’

He has said on a former occasion ; and these men had become as little children even with a child’s tiny outlook. Evidence of this was their very joy in the new powers they possessed. They had gone thus far, they had learnt thus much about Him ; even though there was yet much they did not know, they had learnt the value of acting in His name. Therefore were they beloved and chosen by His Father ; for without that choice, how or what could they have learnt ? He would thank His Father for them ; openly, aloud before them all, He would thank Him. By doing so, He would give them further joy, further confidence in Him, further courage ; the weak things of this world had God chosen to confound the strong, let them rejoice in their infirmities. Before this scene and after it, reaching beyond His life and death, the portrait of Jesus is consistent.

‘ In that same hour
Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Ghost
And answered and said
I confess to thee

O Father
Lord of heaven and earth
Because thou hast hid these things
From the wise and prudent
And hast revealed them
Unto little ones
Yea, Father
For so hath it seemed good in thy sight.'

To these, then, He could now speak more freely. They were His own, His little children ; though their age may have been near His own, yet did they look to Him as a Father. They would accept His word, they would acknowledge His claim, they would listen to what He had to say. Faithful to His custom of rewarding yet more those who in any way believed, He would define all for them more accurately. He would make the groundwork sure, the source of His authority, the depth of His knowledge, the power to teach. He would put deep confidence and happy assurance in the hearts of this first little school of missionaries.

'All things are given to me
By my Father
And no one knoweth who the Son is
But the Father
Neither doth anyone know the Father
But the Son
And he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him.'

But of course He could not be content with that alone. His coming into this world had not been with a view to the next world only ; the revelation of the Father was not for the soul alone. He had Himself become wholly man ; in all things He had made Himself like to man ; He had shouldered man's sorrows and carried man's griefs, precisely that in this world, as well as for the next, a new era might begin. In the Sermon on the Mount He had opened that era by blessing human sorrow :

'Blessed are ye poor
Blessed are the meek
Blessed are the mournful
Blessed are they that suffer persecution.'

Since then, how many times had He invited men to come to Him! Physical sufferers, and He would heal them; mental sufferers, souls that hungered and thirsted for they knew not what, and He would give them nourishment.

‘If any man thirst
Let him come to me
And drink.’

Many, it was true, had refused; they would not believe that this Carpenter of Nazareth could do so much for them. But these men had accepted, and therefore they should receive all that they looked for and more. They should have a sovereign balsam for every wound, a sovereign relief for every burden; and they should find it in this, that He was even as they, one of themselves, a Child among little children, meek among the meek, lowly among the lowly, ‘among them as he that serveth’. The very thing that shocked so many, the familiarity, the equality with one and all, the obvious refusal of all the dignities of men, should be that which for all time should be man's surest consolation. More than that. He had made men's burthen His own; it was no longer theirs only but His. He would give it back to them, shared now by Himself, and they would find a new joy in bearing it. The same load on both shoulders, making them His yoke-fellow and Him theirs,—who would not be glad to carry it? Such labour was labour of love, and so was none.

‘Come to me
All you that labour
And are burthened
And I will refresh you
Take my yoke upon you
And learn of me
Because I am meek
And humble of heart
And you shall find rest for your souls
For my yoke is sweet
And my burthen light.’

What a delight to His heart to be able to give them this assurance; to give it to men who would accept His offer, and would be happy men through life on its account! How many in the past had longed and groped for this relief! And the more they had caught a glimmer of it, the more they had longed. The pagan world had been full of it, and had culminated in that quest :

‘ Where is he
That is born king of the Jews ? ’

Their own Hebrew literature, the Psalms and the prophets, teemed with the continuous cry, ending with the song of Simeon :

‘ Now thou dost dismiss thy servant
O Lord
According to thy word
In peace
Because my eyes have seen thy salvation
Which thou hast prepared
Before the face of all peoples
A light to the revelation of the Gentiles
And the glory of thy people Israel ’ ;

and when he said this he was holding in his arms a meek and humble Infant. With all this long vision in His mind, knowing by His long waiting what the hungering of the ages had meant, from a full heart, affectionate, glad yet aching in response to the craving of good men, Jesus

‘ Turning to his disciples said
Blessed are the eyes
Which see the things which you see
For I say to you
That many prophets and kings
Have desired to see the things that you see
And have not seen them
And to hear the things that you hear
And have not heard them.’

CHAPTER XXVII

80. The Parable of the Good Samaritan

WE have given reason for believing that since the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus spent His time chiefly in Peroea, moving about the Jordan valley. He had returned to the places where in the earliest days He had begun, and where for the most part the Baptist had preached ; He clung to the road He knew well, which ultimately crossed the Jordan, and thence led up through Jericho to Jerusalem. The next scene confirms this impression. Jesus is seated somewhere along this road, with a group of hearers gathered round Him. It is one of those familiar sights, happy echoes of the still greater gatherings that had been about Capharnaum, and the coast of Decapolis to the north. It is a mixed group, of people mainly from Judæa on the one side and Peroea on the other ; we may notice that the Evangelist no longer ventures to call it a multitude. In the audience are some of the leaders of the people ; men of goodwill for the most part, who down here, away from the city, are able with greater ease to show their sympathy. They have long thought like Nicodemus, and have wished to be true. They have been compelled to ask themselves :

' How can a man that is a sinner
Do such miracles ? '

And again :

' These are not the words
Of one that hath a devil
Can a devil open the eyes of the blind ? '

They have asked themselves these questions, and have wished to ask Him more ; not, as their brethren in Jerusalem, that He might give them further signs, but, as Nicodemus, that they might reconcile His teaching with that of their tradition.

Among these is one, a lawyer, versed in the wisdom of

Moses and its application, who, with his legal mind, would make yet another test of this maker of new laws. Moses laid down certain conditions to be observed if a Jew would win salvation ; he would ask Jesus what were His conditions and compare them. He would ask in no disbelieving mood ; he wished to know the truth ; he was a lawyer and sought for evidence.

There was a pause in the discourse that had been uttered ; there followed, as usual, an impressive silence.

' And behold a certain lawyer stood up
Tempting him and saying
Master
What must I do
To possess eternal life ? '

We have had experience enough of the ways of Jesus with enquirers. To simple people, ignorant and childlike, He has set argument aside and just said : ' Come '. A Pharisee He has treated as a Pharisee, and has met him on the ground of his own learning. From sinners He has drawn some proof of contrition ; from good men He has asked for faith ; He has been all to all, suiting Himself to the nature and temper of each. And with this man He is the same. He is a lawyer ; he thinks in legal terms ; let him then quote the Law. He wishes to judge between Moses and Jesus ; let him first lay down the conditions of Moses' Law.

' But he said
What is written in the law ?
How readest thou ? '

It was an easy question, and the lawyer was ready with his answer. There was, first, the great law, known to every Jew ; the law written in the phylacteries, which every priest wore upon his person.

' Hear, O Israel
The Lord our God is one God
Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
With thy whole heart
And with thy whole soul
And with thy whole strength
And these words which I command thee this day
Shall be in thy heart.'
Deuteronomy vi, 4–6.

And there was that other, which followed upon this, and which alone made life possible. He would add that, too. He knew how much this Man, Jesus, made of the forgiveness, the service, the love of others, and he would show that in his own Law this was no less enjoined.

‘ Seek not revenge
Nor be mindful of the injury of thy citizens
Thou shalt love thy friend as thyself
I am the Lord.’
Leviticus xix, 18.

Therefore with confidence, with no hesitation, as one who ought to know and knew,

‘ He answering said
Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
With thy whole heart
And with thy whole soul
And with all thy strength
And with all thy might
And thy neighbour as thyself.’

The lawyer had made his defence ; he could not but wonder what the Master had to say that would improve upon these two. By the addition of his last sentence, abundantly justified, he had included much at least of what he knew to be the special teaching of Jesus. He was not prepared for the reply. He looked for some contention ; the maker of the new Law would surely add to what had just been said, or He would correct it. He had done it before.

‘ I say to you ’,

had been His tone at other times, over-riding the teaching of Moses ; surely He would do the same now, when there was question of the first foundation of the Law.

But there was no contention, no shadow of desire to improve on what had been said. Jesus seemed satisfied with his reply ; from the lawyer He asked for nothing more ; instead, with a look of approval He looked up to him,

‘ And he said to him
Thou hast answered right
This do
And thou shalt live.’

It was a sufficient answer, but for the lawyer it did not suffice. If the problem were so easily solved, men might ask why he had ventured to put it. There was a further question, more subtle, less easy to be set aside, which would almost compel the Master in some way to commit Himself.

'But he being willing to justify himself
Said to Jesus
And who is my neighbour?'

Jesus looked at him. The man meant well, and had given Him this golden opportunity. He turned His eyes from him, and looked across the Jordan along the road that ran from the spot to Jericho. Thence it wound to the left, among the now bare hills, rising up from the Dead Sea level, climbing over ridges, singing into deep valleys, clinging to the mountain-side till it rose for the last time by Bethania. Along that road with its twistings and turnings was ample opportunity for the highwayman; caravans might pass in comparative security, but a solitary traveller, above all one who was not of the country, was never safe. Jesus looked along this road. He fixed His gaze on the distant hills that finally hid it from view; then quietly, as if He were reciting a lyric, or recalling a very dear memory,

'Jesus answering said
A certain man went down
From Jerusalem to Jericho
And fell among robbers
Who also stripped him
And having wounded him
Went away
Leaving him half dead
And it chanced that a certain priest
Went down the same way
And seeing him
Passed by
In like manner also a Levite
When he was near the place
And saw him
Passed by
But a certain Samaritan
Being on his journey
Came near him
And seeing him

Was moved with compassion
And going up to him
Bound up his wounds
Pouring in oil and wine
And setting him upon his own beast
Brought him to an inn
And took care of him
And the next day he took out two pence
And gave it to the host
And said
Take care of him
And whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above
I at my return will repay thee'

Jesus paused. For a moment He let the vivid picture stamp itself upon the lawyer's mind. Then He turned to him and asked :

'Which of these three
In thy opinion
Was neighbour to him that fell among the robbers ?'

If all the parables of Jesus are perfect things, to which among all the literature of the world no parallels can be found, this parable of the Good Samaritan must be classed as perhaps the most perfect story that has ever issued from the mouth of man. It is perfect in what it says, and in what it refrains from saying ; there is not a word too much or too little. It tells enough to bring up successive scenes of a whole tragedy. While it leaves the hearer's imagination free, the plainest mind can see the drama before him ; the road down among the hills and valleys beyond Jericho, the dark and dangerous angles, the coming of the solitary traveller in the morning, before others are yet astir ; the ambush, the struggle, the blood, the robbery down to the victim's clothing, the merciless vanishing of the robbers with their loot, the helpless, half-conscious moaning of the wounded man, lying in his blood on the roadside, and then all that follows after. All is contained in a single sentence, simple, obvious, and yet hard to imitate. It is one more example of the truth we have often been compelled to witness ; the deeper the student of language, the more he must be impressed by the absolute supremacy of Jesus as the master of human speech. It is always the same, in nothing is He surpassed; whether in narrative or in thundering invective, in conversation or in preaching, in controversy or in appeal, in illustration or apt quotation, in readiness of wit or in plain sympathy, in flow of words or in reticence, in pointed accusation or in irony of silence, in defence or in attack;

'Never did man speak
As this man.'

Thus in this parable, when he would describe the priest and the Levite, He makes no charge, He points no moral, He expresses no indignation, He utters no complaint, He does not even delay with a word of description; He just lets their action and behaviour describe them to the life. There is a sentence for each and no more, for of more they are not worthy; yet each is perfectly painted, and those who hear Him know well that the picture in each case is true. A priest or Levite himself might have heard and might not have been offended. It was a question of caste; such a man to them might be accounted untouchable; caste is the antithesis of the love of man.

Then there is the Samaritan. The last time we have heard of Samaritans was when, on His way up to Jerusalem, He was rudely refused a shelter in one of their towns; here is a singular return for their incivility. Jesus might just as well have said, 'A certain Galilæan', which would have pleased His own disciples, or 'A certain man of Perœa', which would have won the favour of many there; He might have mentioned no name at all, as He did in other parables. Instead, deliberately, He chose a name which none could utter without scorn. 'A certain Samaritan', with whom no Jew would associate; 'being on his journey' to Jerusalem, therefore a trader, since for no other purpose but trade would a Samaritan enter that city; a heretic, and yet a man whose position had taught him to suffer, and therefore to feel for the suffering of another.

Such a man comes into the story, and at once the Teller of it warms to His theme. The priest and the Levite have been dismissed with each a sentence; the Samaritan is followed step by step. We see him in the dress which marks him as from Samaria, riding up the road to Jerusalem, his merchandise fixed to his saddle, occupied with his own thoughts and meditations. Suddenly at a bend he notices the bleeding body of the Jew. He stops, he dismounts, he goes alongside, he examines ; he asks no questions, he cares not who the man may be, had he been a highwayman it would have been all one. He returns to his mule for oil and wine, and such other means for first-aid as he possessed. He lifts the man to his feet, helps him on to his own beast, holds him while he guides the animal towards the nearest caravanserai. There are no questions asked ; there is no bargain made ; orders are given, money is paid down, and more is promised. This practical Samaritan is emphatic ; though compassionate he is not sentimental ; on his way back from the city he will meet all expenses ; as Jesus concludes His story He dwells with satisfaction on the characteristic tone of the merchant's charity.

The lawyer had asked what he must do that he might possess eternal life ; Jesus had compelled him to answer his question for himself. He had asked who was his neighbour, and again, when the parable was ended, he was made to frame his own definition. Jesus turned to him and said :

'Which of these three
In thy opinion
Was neighbour to him who fell among the robbers ?'

There was only one answer ; yet it was not easily given. For a Jew to honour a Samaritan was no easy thing ; the very mention of his name was odious. Though the lawyer of Judæa might honour the deed, yet would he eliminate the name of the person who did it, and

'He said
He that shewed mercy to him.'

But that confession was enough ; and from such a man Jesus would not ask for more. He had acknowledged the standard ; a neighbour was one who 'shewed mercy' to another, whoever the one or the other might be ; if the Jews would learn that lesson there would yet be hope to win them. Had He not said long ago to Pharisees and other lawyers, quoting their own Scriptures against them :

'Go
And learn what this meaneth
I will have mercy
And not sacrifice'?

He looked with favour on the lawyer. He would not suffer him to feel that he had been beaten or unduly humbled; that was not the way with Jesus Christ. He had owned that he had received his answer; let him apply it, let him not leave it an empty theory, and then he would know well enough how he might win eternal life.

'And Jesus said to him
Go
And do thou in like manner.'

81. At the House of Martha

The meeting broke up, Jesus passed on, and we next find Him on that same road which He has just introduced into His last story. He went up through Jericho towards the Holy City. He stopped at 'a certain town', as S. Luke calls it; S. John lets us know that it is Bethsaida, the little residential town on the east side of Olivet, where the road from Jericho divided. In Bethania was at least one family that was devoted to Him; a family consisting of a brother and two sisters. They were well-to-do; they were much respected in the little town. Long since they had come to know and love Him. Had He not befriended the youngest in Magdala, and saved her from her terrible surroundings, and restored her good name by keeping her with Himself, and then sent her home to her heart-broken sister and brother? Had they not rejoiced in her return at last? For all this how could they repay Him? Whenever He passed that way they welcomed Him; as long as He would stay with them, all they possessed was gladly placed at His service. Nothing was too good for Him; thus had gratitude grown to love, and love was rapidly opening their eyes and finding faith, fanned into flame by the friendship returned of Jesus, for Lazarus, and Martha, and Mary.

'Now it came to pass
As they went
That he entered into a certain town
And a certain woman
Named Martha
Received him into her house.'

It would seem from this account that Martha was the owner of the house, and that Lazarus their brother lived elsewhere, no doubt with a household and family of his own. To-day, at the upper end of Bethania on the slope of the hill, a ruined foundation of an ancient house is shown, and is called the home of Martha and Mary. Into this house, at their invitation, Jesus entered ; with them for a time He stayed ; for these two, as always for His own, He was again the same homely Carpenter of Nazareth, differing from others chiefly in this, that He was very naturally lovable.

And the two women showed their love, though each in a different way. For Martha was the elder. She owned and managed the house ; hers was a practical mind, finding its delight in work, its sanctity in serving others. Mary, the younger, was also the deeper ; one of those who must either be great saints or great sinners. For good or for evil she could 'love much'. She could see further than her sister into the souls of men and women ; while she lived her contented life at home the call of the greater life was always drawing her, whether to the wider world beyond little Bethania, or to the new world into which the Man she loved had given her an insight. She could work like Martha, but never with the same zest. Martha could give her whole service, Mary only lent herself to it. Martha could see no better proof of love, Mary could sit back and realize that just love itself was its own best proof ; that though love is shown in deeds, yet in its fullest sense it is more than any deed can show. It is love for love, self given for self ; it is being, which is more than doing.

Jesus came to the house of these women. He could rest there and eat what they set before Him. As He had taught His disciples, He blessed that house with His peace, and the spirit of peace rested on it. While they prepared for Him He waited. He sat aside, occupied with His own thoughts, looking down the valley that sank away towards the Dead Sea, across to the mountains beyond where a year or so before His friend John the Baptist had been done to death. In that house, with the visions it conjured up about Him, He had much to ponder. Up that valley the Hebrews had first entered the Promised Land. Down there by the Jordan Elias had left this earth in a fiery chariot. There He had Himself been first announced by His Precursor, and had made His first appearance. On the mountain to the left He had endured His hours of temptation ; from the mountain behind, in a very short time, He would ascend even as Elias. He had come to love Bethania. It was a spot where seclusion was possible, whose surroundings encouraged to prayer. He would come there again; so far as He could He would make it His new home; there were those in Bethania who would always give Him shelter.

As He sat and pondered on these and other things, Mary paused in her work and watched Him. Soon she could resist the attraction no longer. He who in the Pharisee's house at Magdala had drawn her to Him like a magnet, here in her sister's house had not lost His fascination. She who 'loved Him much' when she was a sinner loved Him no less now that she was a pardoned penitent. She who then could brave all the world and pour out her love at His feet, now in her sister's house could resist those feet no longer. Almost unconsciously she laid down her dishes; abstractedly she sat on the floor beside Him. He welcomed her, He spoke to her; together for a time they talked of things wonderful, together they lapsed into silence, for the things of which they had spoken had leaped beyond the reach of words.

'And she had a sister called Mary
Who sitting at the Lord's feet
Heard his word.'

So they sat together, lost to all else. Bethania, Magdala, all the garish world, what was it to the Light and the Life? But there was an interruption. Martha was busy with her work as hostess. She loved the Master well, and would wear out her hands in His service. She loved her sister well, and would therefore have her do the same; if Mary loved Him as she said, then why should she not devote herself to service? She looked at the scene before her. The Master lost in meditation, that was only natural; but Mary lost in day-dreaming, when He was there to be served, that she could not understand. She had followed Him in Galilee with the other women, ministering to Him of her substance; why should she now sit idle, as if His coming were only a thing to be enjoyed?

She must remonstrate; she must have the child corrected from her dreaming ways. For this was no new thing; it was a growing habit; with all her fascination—for many loved her well—Mary loved best to be alone, and often enough was a trouble to those about her. To her elder sister she would not, because she could not, listen; she was kind, she was considerate, she thought little of herself, but in this matter of her dreaminess, her long hours of silence, and then of impetuous outpouring of herself in word or deed, she was incorrigible. Now at last there might be hope. If she would not listen to her sister Martha, to Jesus at least she would listen. Martha would ask Him to admonish her. She would ask Him to admonish her to become more normal, to live as others lived and do as others did. Such an opportunity was not to be lost.

'But Martha was busy about much serving
Who stood and said
Lord
Hast thou no care
That my sister hath left me alone to serve?
Speak to her therefore
That she help me.'

Surely this was a sound piece of reasoning; surely she was pleading for what was only common sense. Yet He did not at once respond. He looked at her patiently, affectionately; elsewhere we are told by S. John:

'Now Jesus loved Martha
And her sister Mary',

and the name of Martha comes first. He could not blame her zeal; He could not find fault with her self-sacrificing charity. Nevertheless there was something else which, for the sake of all mankind, He must seize this occasion to defend. To work for Him was good, but to love Him was better; to serve Him was a glory, but to live with Him was a greater glory still. It was noble to be His handmaiden, but to be blessed among women was nobler. To seek the means to please Him was holy, but to seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice was to secure that all the rest would come. Martha stood for much that was best in the world, but Mary represented something more that transcended all the rest; indeed without it all the rest would be of little worth.

All this was written in His face as He turned Himself towards Martha. He would not hurt her; yet Mary He must defend. He would praise Martha for the work she did; but Mary's seeming idleness must no less be vindicated. The life of labour must be honoured; nevertheless more honour must be given to the life of prayer.

'And the Lord answering said to her
Martha, Martha,
Thou art careful
And art troubled
About many things
But one thing is necessary
Mary hath chosen the best part
Which shall not be taken away from her.'

82. In the House of the Judæan Pharisee

In Jerusalem, as we have seen, the life of Jesus was no longer safe; thus much already His enemies had secured. In Galilee there was little hope of further progress; the people of the province had grown used to Him, and had perverted His benefits to their own ends. In Peroea He had to deal with a less sophisticated people, less worldly ambitious than those of Galilee, less spiritually proud than their neighbours in Jerusalem, but still less easily influenced by anything religious. They were good people in their way, industrious, harmless, indifferent to the excitements that stirred others; but they were not the soil on which the revelation of Himself was likely to grow. There remained the people of Judæa, living round about Jerusalem. These at the beginning had gathered round and listened to the Baptist. They had later gathered round Jesus in greater numbers still, when He had first appeared by the Jordan. Even in Capharnaum and its neighbourhood contingents from Judæa had been conspicuous among the crowds that followed Him. Now, in these latter days, when He had again come into their neighbourhood, many showed a willingness to welcome Him, and to believe in Him, with a far deeper faith than did the coarser natures in Galilee. In Judæa the question was continually being asked:

'Is not this the Christ?'

In Galilee men were content to call Him King and Prophet, or, at the most, Elias risen from the dead. In Judæa they were interested in what He said and taught; in Galilee miracles won them, but what He taught concerned them but little.

For this reason, outside Jerusalem, the leaders of the people had needs be circumspect in their dealings with Him. In Galilee He had found protection, from Pharisees and Herodians alike, in the enthusiasm of the crowd ; in Judæa the growing belief that He might indeed be the Messias could not be too easily ignored. It became less easy to set Him aside ; the open abuse, common enough at the beginning, was now less often heard ; open controversy with Him, ending as invariably it did in their humiliation, was avoided. He commanded consideration, the people insisted upon it, and for a time His very enemies were compelled to give it to Him. In Jerusalem He might still be browbeaten ; in the towns and villages about He must be treated with respect.

Moreover, as we have seen, among the Pharisees themselves the enemy faction had as yet by no means everything its own way. In Galilee, in Magdala, freer-thinking, easier-going, more worldly minded Pharisees had been rather proud to entertain this nine days' wonder at their table. In Jerusalem itself Nicodemus was not alone in his desire for fair play ; there were others who seriously suspected that the claim of Jesus was by no means proved to be absurd. Outside Jerusalem, living in their country houses, were others again whose judgements were yet in the balance. They could not make up their minds. Nicodemus and his few associates were their friends, and their opinions commanded becoming respect. On the other hand, the Pharisaic body to which they belonged must at all costs be maintained. Its customs must be respected, its exactions must be carried out, respect for its members must be enforced in every way ; even if there were among them things not to be admired, these need not be made public. In the preservation of the Pharisees and their authority the whole fabric of Judaism, so it seemed to them, depended.

It chanced that about this time, when Jesus was in lower Judæa, a Pharisee of this type was among those who were listening to Him. He had opened His discourse severely, but had ended in calm. He had said deep things, evidently not to be fathomed in a moment ; let their brethren in Jerusalem say what they would, this Man was worth further study, His company was worth cultivating. The gathering was about to disperse ; He might be leaving the neighbourhood, and one never knew when He might come that way again. He would invite Him to dinner, along with other friends, Pharisees, and Scribes, and lawyers, and hope thereby to learn more about Him.

'And as he was speaking
A certain Pharisee prayed him
That he would dine with him.'

Jesus at once consented. Whatever these Pharisees might think, or say, or do against Him, they could never say that He treated them with discourtesy ; whatever He Himself might think, or say, or do concerning them, they should have Him with them whenever they chose. The pondering Pharisee had come to Him in the darkness of the night, and He had sat up with him. The worldling Pharisee had invited Him to be his guest and He had gone. Elsewhere Pharisees had questioned Him and He had given them their answer. Never had they gone away from Him but they had felt that He had given them more than their due. All He had said to them they had not liked ; but they could not bring it up against Him either that He had ignored them, or that He had failed to answer their questions. Whatever else this Jesus was, however they longed to suppress Him, none could say that He was not brave, and true, and consistent, and too great either for paltry bickering or to be annoyed by their malice.

But, on the other hand, while He gave them their due respect, He would not yield to their unjust and merciless traditions. He came to table with this man who had invited Him ; as they entered the room the water was standing in the vessels, waiting for them to perform the usual ablutions. The Pharisee and his friends went through the usual formalities ; Jesus ignored them. His host noticed His behaviour ; he was shocked, or at least he affected to be shocked ; when they reclined before the meal the affair still rankled in his mind. He could not restrain himself from remarking on it.

Jesus was ready with His answer ; indeed it would seem that He had deliberately so acted that His action might provoke comment. In Magdala it had been just the opposite. There the water had not been so much as offered to Him, and He had complained ; here it was offered, and He had passed it by. There He had been treated with unbecoming slight, here there was danger of His giving sanction to a needless imposition. It was a typical act, its significance carried very far. Jesus would use it to drive home another of His thrusts at the very heart of Pharisaism.

'And the Pharisee began to say
Thinking within himself
Why he was not washed before dinner
And the Lord said to him
Now you Pharisees
Make clean the outside of the cup and the platter
But your inside is full of rapine and iniquity
Ye fools
Did not he that made that which is without
Make also that which is within?
But yet that which remaineth
Give alms
And behold
All things are clean unto you
But woe to you Pharisees
Because you tithe mint and rue and every herb
And pass over judgement
And the charity of God
Now these things you ought to have done
And not to leave the others undone
Woe to you Pharisees
Because you love the uppermost seats in the synagogues
And salutations in the market-place
Woe to you
Because you are as sepulchres
That appear not
And men that walk over are not aware.'

The external opposed to the internal; taking instead of giving; the letter of justice in place of its spirit; the Law superseding the charity of God; salutations received from men whom rather they ought to have served; a seeming garden, in reality a place of tombs; here we have the root of the contention between Jesus and the Pharisees. Later we shall have it more elaborated, here it is stated in brief. The curse of Pharisaism is insincerity, above all insincerity in the name of religious truth; external substitution for what is wanting within. Now we understand more clearly why He dreaded above all things else this 'leaven of the Pharisees' among His own disciples. It was the one danger of all religious form, whether it be in worship, or law, or religious life, or sanctity itself; the danger that form should grow into formality, that expression of truth should stereotype into a lie. His followers were to be prudent; they were to be simple; but they were not to be insincere. Prudent let them always be, insincere never; the two are not one and the same, and let them not deceive themselves with the comfortable, conscience-killing lie that they are.

Among the guests at that table were, as we have seen, some lawyers, men responsible for the interpretation and the administration of the Law. Naturally then it seemed to them that He who attacked the interpretation attacked no less those who were responsible for framing it. The Pharisees might be arrogant, but at least they observed what the lawyers had sanctioned. They might be insincere, but at least they kept the rules. They might be exacting; still they were within the limits of the Law. Whatever then He might say against the Pharisees, the lawyers should not be condemned. The Law was right, its interpreters were right; let Jesus show that it was not these but the practice of the Law that He denounced.

'And one of the lawyers
Answering saith to him
Master
In saying these things
Thou condemnest us also.'

His reply was unexpected. Yes, if they chose so to take it, He condemned them as well as the Pharisees; He condemned the present interpretation of the Law as much as He condemned the way it was put into practice.

'But he said
Woe to you lawyers also
Because you load men with burdens
Which they cannot bear
And you yourselves touch not the packs
With one of your fingers
Woe to you
Who built the monuments of the prophets
And your fathers killed them

Truly you bear witness
That you consent to the doings of your fathers
For they indeed killed them
And you build their sepulchres
For this cause also the wisdom of God said
I will send to them prophets and apostles
And some of them they will kill
And persecute
That the blood of all the prophets
Which was shed from the foundation of the world
May be required of this generation
From the blood of Abel
Unto the blood of Zacharias
Who was slain between the altar and the temple
Yea I say to you
It shall be required of this generation
Woe to you lawyers
For you have taken away the key of knowledge
You yourselves have not entered in
And those that were entering in
You have hindered.'

Three distinct charges does Jesus make against the lawyers, and it is to be noticed that not one of them has any reference to Himself. He condemns them, first, because they have made life hard for others, while in return they have done nothing to relieve their burthen. He condemns them because they commemorate the prophets by means of their tombs, while they approve their murder ; they follow those who murdered them and uphold their teaching, not the teaching of the men whose tombs they honour. Lastly He condemns them because, while professing to be guides and teachers, in reality they teach nothing. They have narrowed down the sources of knowledge ; they have refused themselves to seek further, and have forbidden the same to others.

All through this condemnation the heart of Jesus is opened wide. There is no word of blame for the people ; they were still to Him only 'sheep without a shepherd'. But it was those who should have been and who posed as the shepherds that stirred His indignation ; the 'wolves in sheep's clothing', as He called them elsewhere, the men who ought to have known, and had the means of knowing, and would not use the means except to their own deliberate undoing; who refused to draw the conclusion that both reason and conscience dictated, and who, worst of all, prevented others from drawing it. Woe to such men! Whatever their honour now as lawyers and Pharisees, and heads of the Church, it were better for them if a millstone were tied about their necks and they were cast into the sea. He is fighting for a people robbed of their inheritance, spiritually enslaved. He is fighting for freedom from a faction, and He knows very well to what the battle must lead.

The effect was immediately apparent. Jesus had come to that table in His independent way, disregarding the conventions which were no more than custom. He had yielded to the Pharisees in all that concerned their status, but according to their works He would not do. Now a second time at the meal He had committed a breach of good manners; He had turned a convivial meeting into an occasion to abuse His host and his associates. He had gone further. There were present independent minds, balanced minds, legal minds, who professed to belong to neither side or to both, and were advocates of what they would call fair play. These He had alienated; indeed what He said to them was more provoking than what He had said to the host and his friends. Such language was not to be endured; true or false the charge was resented and protest must be made. Those who at the beginning had made a show of friendliness were stung to the quick, and could no longer conceal the truth within their hearts.

Long before He had ended His attack the hostility began to show itself. There were constant interruptions. Could the correct Pharisees, in their own house, endure that they should be accused, without a word of proof, of being 'full of rapine and iniquity'? Were they not the true sons of Abraham, and did not all Israel hang upon their lips? Were they to be told to give alms, as if they did not do so? Had this Man not Himself, on a former occasion, acknowledged that they did so in abundance? As for the tithes, had He not Himself said that 'the labourer is worthy of his hire'? And was it not their duty to see to it that the Temple, and its sacrifices, and its functions, were worthily supported? And why did He blame them for taking the first places in the synagogues? Where else would He have them sit? Or for being saluted in the streets? What was this but a right recognition of authority?

The lawyers followed in like manner. How easily could every word He said against them be refuted! Evidently He was no lawyer, or He would never have made empty charges such as these. They imposed on the people burthens unbearable? The people did bear them, and that without a murmur, so unbearable they could not be. The people welcomed them, they asked for them, they cherished them as proofs that they were true children of Israel; when the great feasts came round, and the pilgrims flocked into the city, and the offerings were lavishly poured out, what better proof was needed that His charge was unjust? And as for the monuments of the prophets, what was this He said? How could the dead be honoured better than by worthy tombs? Let Him look down the valley of Kedron and see the respect that was paid to them. That some of the prophets had perished unhappily was a misfortune which could not now be remedied, but the past was not in their hands. Better was it now to leave all that alone and forget it. As for knowledge, how could He say with truth that they concealed it, either from themselves or from others? What else were they doing all their lives but explaining the Law, and applying it, and answering questions, and solving problems, and deciding disputes? That was their profession, their function, their duty, and they were performing it; what more could He want of them?

'And as he was saying these things to them
The Pharisees and lawyers
Began violently to urge him
And to oppress his mouth
About many things
Lying in wait for him
And seeking to catch something from his mouth
That they might accuse him.'

Thus even outside the city the atmosphere began to thicken, and He made no effort to disperse it. It was another turning-point. There were still a few months to run, and until the Pasch He must keep them at bay; but during all this time His onset becomes stronger and stronger. They might 'lie in wait for him', but He would not be trapped; they might 'seek to catch something from His mouth', but they would fail. Only when their hour came would He royally permit them both to capture Him and to turn His own words against Him.

At the same time it is impossible not to dwell upon the agony of soul that such a situation must have caused. They 'began violently to urge Him'; they began 'to oppress His mouth about many things'; they began 'to lie in wait for Him'; they began 'to seek to catch something from His mouth that they might accuse Him'. If this were said of any other man, the position would at once be pronounced intolerable. And be it noted, this enmity arose not from misunderstanding only; it was from sheer, clear-sighted hatred. It arose from deliberate opposition to the Man, whether what He said was true or not. He was a menace to their power; He had seen through their falsehood and exposed it. Cost what it might, truth or no truth, He must be shown to be a greater sham than they; the charges He brought against them must be visited on His own head, 'full measure and flowing over'. Cleverness, cunning, unscrupulosity, love of power, hypocrisy, falsehood, hide-bound convention, lethargy of spirit, were all ranged against Him, determined that on some plea, on any plea whatever, to save their reputation, to keep safe their grip on what they had, His doom must be secured. He knew it all and He endured it; He wavered not an inch.

CHAPTER XXVIII

83. With the Multitude in Judæa

THERE was another thing that these men feared. In every word that Jesus spoke it was manifest that deep in His heart He had compassion on the multitude, real compassion and fellow-feeling; and the multitude was quick to detect it. Down in these southern parts, as of old in Galilee, the people were beginning to respond; the crowds were becoming every day more dense; when He left the house of the Pharisee there were many waiting for Him, many more thronged about Him when He appeared. They pressed close, they trod on one another; they were eager to see this Man who could so brave the lawyers and the Pharisees. But, apparently at least, He did not take much notice of them; He had a more important task to perform. This meeting, with His own gathered about Him, gave Him another opportunity to drive home the lesson He had taught on the Lake of Galilee. It would bear repetition; He would repeat it again many times; if only His own could be preserved from this curse of Pharisaism all would go well.

Here and in many subsequent places we are confronted with a further harmonistic problem. S. Luke now begins to repeat, at times in the identical words, at times with additions of his own, many words of Jesus which we have already heard elsewhere, particularly from S. Matthew. Are they truly repetitions? Did Jesus use the same phrases twice, or more, as if they were some formula? Or does S. Luke, in his aim at historical sequence, suggest the right order and time and place for many incidents which S. Matthew, in keeping with his aim, has thrown together? We incline to think so; the aim of the writer, the subject-matter, above all with S. Luke's amplifications, the circumstances to be presupposed, all would seem to take them from the peace of Galilee to the more stormy area of Judæa. Hence we give them here as S. Luke gives them, without more repetition than is necessary, though to be consistent we would be inclined to bring to this place much that has already been given elsewhere.

'And when great multitudes stood about him, so that they trod upon one another, he began to say to his disciples: Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, nor hidden that shall not be known. For whatsoever things you have spoken in darkness, shall be published in the light; and that which you have spoken in the ear in the chambers shall be preached on the housetops. And I say to you my friends, Be not afraid of them who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do; but I will shew you whom you shall fear: fear ye him who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Yea, the very hairs of your head are all numbered; fear not therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. And I say to you: Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; and he that shall deny me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but to him that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven. And when they shall bring you into the synagogues, and to magistrates and powers, be not solicitous how or what you shall answer, or what you shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what you shall say.'

The clouds were gathering and the disciples knew it; experience in these last months had taught them much. Some half a year ago they had been shocked and frightened because something He had said and done had 'scandalized' the Pharisees; by this time they had become used to His defiance. If they were to stand by Him there might be trouble ahead; His warning, therefore, and His encouragement were timely. It may well be that S. Matthew collected all this into one place, but S. Luke would seem to be giving it its proper setting.

Another incident at this time has the colour of Judæa about it, not of Galilee. He had attacked the lawyers; He had blamed them for imposing heavy burthens; then to the people it would seem that He had set Himself up as a judge. If so, they would bring their lawsuits to Him; while Galilee sought miracles, and cures of the body, these men of Judæa sought cures for civil strife.

> ' And one of the multitude said to him
> Master
> Speak to my brother
> That he divide the inheritance with me.'

But as in Galilee, so in Judæa, He would not let them be misled. He had not come for this; in Galilee His miracles were meant to lead men to higher conclusions, in Judæa His blaming of the Pharisees and lawyers was intended for no usurpation. He would do no injury to their legal rights; He spoke as He spoke because His kingdom was in another sphere, it was not of this world.

> ' But he said to him
> Man
> Who hath appointed me
> Judge or divider over you ? '

Still, one thing He would do. He would heal if He could the source of all litigation. In few places in His teaching do we find Him so explicitly striking at an evil at its root. It was a model answer, the answer of sublime moral theology. He would give the principle, let men apply it for themselves; if they would, there would be less need of the Law.

And beautifully He taught it. By one of His vivid parables He drove His lesson home; a parable which has its setting in wealthier Judæa rather than in impoverished Galilee. There it was enough to warn His hearers not to store up their hard-earned wages in secret corners where thieves might break in and steal.

' And he said to them: Take heed and beware of all covetousness. For a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of things he possesseth. And he spoke a similitude to them saying: The land of a certain rich man brought forth plenty of fruits; and he thought within himself saying: What shall I do? because I have no room where to bestow my fruits. And he said: This will I do; I will pull down my barns and will build greater; and into them will I gather all things that are grown to me, and my goods. And I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer. But God said to him: Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.'

S. Luke continues, with a single line of introduction. What does this signify? It would seem to confirm what has already been said, that the Evangelist has collected in this place much that he cannot expressly date and yet must be recorded, but which belongs more to this period than to any other. It is a point for scholars to decide; for us it is enough only to record it.

'And he said to his disciples: Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. The life is more than the meat, and the body is more than the raiment. Consider the ravens; for they sow not, neither do they reap, neither have they storehouse nor barn, and God feedeth them; how much are you more valuable than they! And which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If then you be not able to do so much as the least thing, why are you solicitous for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow; they labour not, neither do they spin; but I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these. Now if God clothe in this manner the grass that is to-day in the field and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more you, O ye of little faith? And seek not what you shall eat, nor what you shall drink, and be not lifted up on high. For all these things do the nations of the world seek; but your Father knoweth that you have need of these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.

'Fear not, little flock; for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom. Sell what you possess and give alms, make to yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in heaven which faileth not, where no thief approacheth nor moth consumeth. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord when he shall return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister unto them. And if he shall come in the second watch or come in the third watch and find them so, blessed are those servants. But this know ye, that if the householder did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch and would not suffer his house to be broken open. Be you then also ready, for at what hour you think not the Son of Man will come.

'And Peter said to him: Lord, dost thou speak this parable to us, or likewise to all? And the Lord said: Who thinkest thou is the faithful and wise steward whom his lord setteth over his family to give them their measure of wheat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom when his lord shall come he shall find so doing; verily I say to you he will set him over all that he possesseth. And if that servant shall say in his heart: My lord is long a coming, and shall begin to strike the men-servants and maid-servants, and to eat and to drink and to be drunk, the lord of that servant will come in the day that he hopeth not, and at the hour that he knoweth not, and shall separate him, and shall appoint him his portion with unbelievers and hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And that servant who knew the will of his lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And unto whomsoever much is given, of him much will be required; and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more.

'I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be enkindled? And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished? Think ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, No, but separation. For there shall be from henceforth five in one house divided, three against two and two against three; the father shall be divided against the son and the son against the father; and the mother against the daughter and the daughter against her mother; the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

'And he said also to the multitudes: When you see a cloud rising from the west, presently you say, A shower is coming: and so it happeneth. And when you see the south wind blow you say, There will be heat: and it cometh to pass. You hypocrites, you know how to discern the face of the heaven and of the earth, but how is it that you do not discern this time? and why even of yourselves do you not judge that which is just? And when thou goest with thy adversary to the prince, whilst thou art in the way, endeavour to be delivered from him; lest perhaps he draw thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the exacter, and the exacter cast thee into prison. I say to thee, Thou shalt not go out thence until thou pay the very last mite.'

34. The Galilæans Slain in the Temple

At this point we are suddenly brought up against two other forces which cannot but have had a strong influence on the career and methods of Jesus. We are told of a massacre of Galilæans in the very Temple precincts by the order of the Roman Governor. With all his weakness and want of sympathy Pilate could not have committed such an act for nothing. He was neither a bloodthirsty Herod the Great, nor was he a capricious Herod Antipas. He was a Roman, and though he could be unspeakably cruel when it suited his purpose, he would always have a reason for his cruelty. He was the Governor; as such he must always have a plea to produce for everything he did; otherwise he might be in trouble with the authorities in Rome. Once or twice already by his arrogant assumption he had overstepped the bounds of worldly prudence; by this time he had learnt to be more cautious. Pilate was weak, and therefore when placed in authority was offensively arrogant; he was a coward and therefore could give merciless orders; he was a time-server seeking power, and therefore could assume high-handed action wholly without justification. He disbelieved in himself, knowing his own falsehood, and therefore supposed that no one else was true; he hated trouble and therefore took care, whenever he was able, at whatever cost, to put responsibility for whatever might go wrong on the shoulders of others.

When, then, we hear of his shooting Galilæans in the Temple, we may be sure that he had at least a plausible excuse. These Galilæans, as we have seen, were a turbulent people. In their own country they were notorious for their excessive nationalism; they were for ever talking of the kingdom that was to come, of the ultimate overthrow of Rome, and they welcomed any upstart or pretender who offered to lead them to victory. On this account even the rule of the contemptible Herod Antipas was preferable to that of the Roman Procurator. When Jesus appeared among them, and spoke to them of His Kingdom, the thoughts of many were immediately turned to their fancied ideal; when He proceeded to win them they could think of nothing else but to make Him king; when He refused the title and rebuked them for their false interpretation of Him, in spite of all He had done for them and had been to them they turned away and followed Him no more; when they came up to Jerusalem, and invited Him to come with them, for their sakes and for His own He refused.

In Jerusalem this spirit was emphasized rather than appeased. If the Galilæans were fanatically opposed to the Roman yoke, in their turn they were looked down upon with scorn by their fellow-Jews in Judæa. They were narrow provincials; their manners were uncouth; they spoke a dialect that made them a butt for ridicule. They were countrymen and uneducated; field-labourers who made a poor show in the city streets. Their absurd opinion of themselves stirred contempt; their violence, their excitable enthusiasm, their utter want of thought for anyone other than themselves, all tended to create disturbance whenever they appeared in numbers in the city. Nothing good ever came out of Galilee; nothing but turmoil, and boasting, and brute strength; their presence at the feasts always caused anxiety, and not seldom a conflict, and when they were suppressed by the Roman arm the people of the city were not wholly displeased.

The consciousness of all this only made the Galilæans more obstreperous. They would come into Jerusalem knowing how the men of Judæa despised them. They would claim their place, and that no small place, in the Temple courts and in its rites. Often there would be disputes and conflicts which the Jewish guards could with difficulty restrain. And this would lead to further trouble. These hot-headed Galilæans would not be content with fighting for their own; they would attack the Judæans, they would accuse them of disloyalty to the cause of Israel, taunt them for being half Romanized, point to the tower at the north-east corner of the Temple square which the Judæans had suffered to be built, the tower from which the Roman soldiery could hold in thraldom even the house of God itself. With men like these, reckless, narrow, fanatic, it would be easy for a quarrel with their fellow Jews to end in a defiance of the eagles of Rome.

It appears that about this time some trouble of the kind just described had been stirred in the Temple precincts by a handful of these turbulent people. They had come up for sacrifice ; there had been a conflict. The Galilæans had won and were engaged upon their sacred rites ; there was clamour, confusion, defiance. To the soldiers looking on from the tower the wrangling was amusing, contemptible ; it was a cheap copy of the scenes in their Roman amphitheatre. A little bloodshedding would enliven it ; Pilate would neither mind, nor care, as long as the excuse of suppressing riot could be given. The Judæans would be only too glad to see their detested Galilæan brethren humbled ; a severe lesson once in a way would do other Galilæans good. The soldiers shot their arrows into the group. Some fell ; their blood was mingled with the sacrifices they were offering. It was a horrible scandal, thought the Jews who witnessed it, but on the whole the less said about it the better.

Nevertheless of the crowd that was present at that scene, there were some who would not let the matter lie. The victims of the massacre either were guilty or were not ; either this was a punishment for sin that at last had overtaken them, or the shooting was unjust. If it were the first, they would say no more ; the men had received only their just doom. If the second, then it was only right that in some way they should be avenged. They came down the road across the Jordan and up through Perœa ; on the way they passed the place where Jesus was speaking. He was Himself a Galilæan. He had always shown them special sympathy ; He had given them showers of miracles ; if they told Him of what had happened He would surely be roused. Either He would show that the men who had perished were guilty, or He would condemn the hated Romans ; in either case they would be satisfied. They would try Him and see.

'And there were present at that very time
Some that told him of the Galilæans
Whose blood Pilate had mingled
With their sacrifices.'

Jesus listened to their story. Their suggestion was not new; He had heard it before, especially on that occasion in the south of the city when He had passed the blind man begging at the corner of the street. It was a Pharisaic suggestion; it did not naturally come from the mouth of a Galilæan; with all their vehemence and fanaticism they had a kindlier sympathy for the sick and suffering. The Pharisees were harder; they preferred sacrifice to mercy; they taught 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth', and they judged their God by that standard. If a man were disabled, if he were hurt, it was in punishment for something, someone was to blame. From the first Jesus had challenged this assumption; in His sermons, in His allusions to the Scriptures, in His unswerving practice, in His denunciations, He had combated above all else this false interpretation of the Law. It was wholly contrary to the spirit of that Law, in His own Law charity in judgement would be its characteristic feature.

'And he answering said to them
Think you that these Galilæans
Were sinners above all the men of Galilee
Because they suffered such things
No I say to you
But unless you do penance
You shall all likewise perish.'

He would emphasize what He had to say by another example. Down in the south-eastern corner of the Temple wall had been another tower, overlooking the slope on which was dug the pool of Siloe. This had but recently fallen, and in its fall had killed eighteen men. Of that, too, Jesus had been told; He used the disaster to drive home His lesson, and went on:

'Or those eighteen
Upon whom the tower fell in Siloe
And slew them
Think you
That they also were debtors

Above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem?
No I say unto you
But except you do penance
You shall all likewise perish.'

How crude, as it seems to us now, was the moral judgement of a generation that needed such a lesson! But we forget that we have lived all these centuries under the sun of the God of mercy, and ideas are to us now first principles which to the men of that time were unknown. They had much to learn; they needed infinite patience; He must drive the truth home by illustration; if their very gardeners had patience with their fruit trees, He would have patience with men. As He spoke He looked across the road to a labourer digging round the roots of a fig-tree. It was the latter autumn; tilling was going on, preparing for or during the rain. The tree was just beginning to push out its bulging fingers. And—

'He spoke also this parable
A certain man had a fig-tree
Planted in his vineyard
And he came seeking fruit on it
And found none
And he said to the dresser of the vineyard
Behold for these three years
I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree
And I find none
Cut it down therefore
Why cumbereth it the ground?
But he answering said to him
Lord
Let it alone this year also
Until I dig about it and dung it
And if happily it bear fruit
But if not
Then after that thou shalt cut it down.'

The parable was one which was easily understood by the people of Judæa and its neighbourhood. The vineyard and the fig-tree; a fig-tree growing in a vineyard; both ideas had been used long before by the prophet. Jesus had done little more than take perhaps the most beautiful, and one of the best-known, passages of Isaias and improve upon it.

'I will sing to my beloved the canticle of my cousin, concerning his vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a hill in a fruitful place; and he fenced it in, and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a winepress therein. And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem and ye men of Juda, judge between me and my vineyard! What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes and it hath brought forth wild grapes? And now I will shew you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down, and I will make it desolate, and it shall not be pruned, and it shall not be digged; but briars and thorns shall come up. And I will command the clouds to rain no more upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the man of Juda his pleasant plant. And I looked that he should do judgement, and behold iniquity; and do justice, and behold a cry.'

Isaias v, 1–7.

Another prophet had caught up the same picture:

'I planted thee a chosen vineyard
All true seed
How then art thou turned unto me
Into that which is good for nothing
O strange vineyard.'

Jeremias ii, 21.

Thus had two prophets at least lamented the failure of the chosen people under the figure of the failing fig-tree. Therefore here and now, when Jesus combined the two together, the fig-tree planted in the vineyard and given its allotted three years in which to mature—for only after three years does it bear fruit—it would scarcely be possible for an audience so trained to mistake the application. He had waited for Jerusalem for part of three years, and it had come to this! Yet would He not despair; He would yet have mercy on it, if only because of those who would continue for Him the work of its cultivation.

85. The Infirm Woman on the Sabbath

The Gospels at this period of the life of Jesus are so full of instructions, and above all of warnings and forebodings, that we tend, if we are not careful, to lose the central Figure whom it is our chief effort to discover and study. We are coming to December, four months before the end; as that end drew nearer we have seen how the whole manner of Jesus had changed. Though He had taught and worked His miracles chiefly in Galilee, still Jerusalem, the Holy City, was His cherished goal. There more than elsewhere He had revealed Himself, there after the end would the real new beginning be made; yet there had He been most officially rejected. Not, it was true, by all; as these last months have gone on, even though the miracles which won the Galilæans were fewer, still there has been a steady growth of followers among the people of Judæa. They have been less enthusiastic, it is true, for that is their nature; they have been more cautious, for they have the wrath of the priests and Pharisees to fear. They have bandied arguments with one another, for they are accustomed to religious controversy. Nevertheless in spite of everything they have tended to recognize the truth and greatness of the Man. They have been impressed by the evidence of the one or two miracles which it has pleased Him to work, and by the power of His words, both in refuting the attacks of His enemies, in denouncing them and their ways, in defending the people from oppression, in the clear declaration of Himself and His claim, in the positive assertions of such things as were naturally to man unknown; above all they have been drawn by that winning attraction, assuring, convincing, sincere, which shone through all the bickering and bitterness like sunshine through a black cloud.

This side of the Judæan and Peræan ministry must not be forgotten if we are to understand Jesus aright at this period. The Evangelists make less of it; unlike their aim when they tell of the Galilæan ministry, they are now more concerned with the foreshadowing of the end; only in passing gleams does the other side appear. Still it is manifestly there; alongside of the struggle with His enemies, a peaceful penetration was going on among others, in many ways far deeper, and certainly more lasting, than anything that had been done among the common crowd in Galilee. In Galilee, from first to last, the Scribes and Pharisees had been very outspoken; in Judæa, though both their fear and their hatred were greater, they were compelled to be more cautious. They treated Him with greater deference; when they raged against Him they were driven to make their case appear manifest; to the end they feared to lay hands on Him, for fear of the people who stood by Him.

From the Feast of Tabernacles in October it would seem, as we have said, that Jesus confined Himself to the country on either side of the Jordan ford, sometimes to the east and north in Peroea, sometimes in Judæa itself, between the Jordan and Jerusalem. As the time went on, and the atmosphere grew calmer, He reverted to His old customs. Miracles were not many; He gave Himself much to prayer; on the Sabbath days in particular He appeared in the synagogues and taught; one almost feels a returning of the spirit of the early days when He first appeared in Capharnaum.

In this lull in the storm, in this somewhat more peaceful atmosphere, when passions were more calm, and nature itself was drinking in new life at the opening of the rainy season, Jesus had been teaching as usual in the synagogue on a Sabbath day. When His address was over He noticed in the crowd an old woman. She was well known in the town; she was bent almost double, with her face turned to the ground, and her bones and limbs so stiffened that she could not lift her head at all. In addition, perhaps in consequence of her disease, she could scarcely be said to be in her right mind. For eighteen years she had been in this condition. The neighbours had always pitied her, and helped her, but they could do nothing to relieve her; here in the synagogue, when she came about, they let her move as she would.

'And he was teaching in their synagogue
On their sabbath
And behold there was a woman
Who had a spirit of infirmity
Eighteen years
And she was bowed together
Neither could she look upwards at all.'

Jesus may have changed in many ways, but towards a case like this He had not changed. Nobody asked Him; the woman herself had no inkling of what was about to befall her; it was just a spontaneous act, the eighth recorded, of His own sympathetic generosity. He looked at the woman where she stood, her eyes upon the ground, her hands leaning on a stick. Moved with compassion He called her to Him; the people stood aside and let her come. Then He laid His hands upon her shoulder; there was no parleying, there were no conditions, no asking whether or not she believed. He simply said:

'Woman
Thou art delivered from thy infirmity';

and immediately she stood up straight, as any other woman who was well. She stood up straight; she looked around; for eighteen years she had not done this, and for a time she did not understand. Gradually it began to dawn upon her and upon all what had been performed. It was a miracle; it had been worked for her; it had been worked on her without any request; and she broke out into praises and thanksgiving to God who had done her this favour.

'Whom when Jesus saw
He called her unto him
And said to her
Woman
Thou art delivered from thy infirmity
And he laid his hands upon her
And immediately she was made straight
And glorified God.'

But there was one at least in the synagogue who looked on at the scene and was not pleased. The ruler of the synagogue, the official in charge, was troubled. It was the Sabbath day; on the Sabbath day no work was done; this matter had already been discussed before, and the authorities had always condemned it. But now, what made the matter worse, He had done this thing on this day, here inside the synagogue itself. It was his duty to protest, and he would. But to whom? He dared not speak to Jesus; of Him he had already heard enough to make him careful; cleverer men than he had made complaints and had been silenced. There was another way; he would not blame

Jesus but the people. By this time they ought to know Him; they should not lead Him into temptation; if they would not bring their sick and cripples to Him on the Sabbath day, then He would not so easily break the Sabbath. That Jesus had done what He had done of His own accord, unasked, that the woman was there as any other in the group, he conveniently ignored.

'And the ruler of the synagogue
Being angry
That Jesus had healed on the sabbath
Answering said to the multitude
Six days there are
Wherein you ought to work
In them therefore come and be healed
And not on the sabbath day.'

There were others in that company who were of the ruler's way of thinking, and who welcomed his words with applause. The old charge concerning miracles upon the Sabbath had begun to wear out. He had defied it, He had vindicated Himself against it; to repeat it in an assembly in which the people were for Him was now becoming useless. But this was a new method of attack. If He was not to blame at least the people were; if He must be allowed an exceptional place in regard to the keeping of the Sabbath, they at least knew the Law and were bound by it. It was a happy thought; the ruler of the synagogue had thrown the blame on them; they at least could be accused and would not dare to answer back.

But they forgot with whom they had to deal. Often in His life had Jesus been abused, and blamed, and insulted, and He had passed it by unnoticed; only when there had been danger of scandal to His little ones, or when the honour of His Father had been at stake, had He spoken out. But when the abuse or blame had fallen on His companions, then invariably He had been aroused.

When, then, this cruel charge was made against the people, it was not likely that He would permit it to fall upon their shoulders unheeded. He heard the accusation; it was intended that He should hear it. He knew the crowd was unable to reply; He would answer for it. He turned towards the ruler of the synagogue, and the little group of His supporters. Indignation again shone in His face, as it always shone when He spoke in defence of His followers.

‘And the Lord answering him said
Ye hypocrites
Doth not every one of you
On the sabbath day
Loose his ox or his ass from the manger
And lead them to water
And ought not this daughter of Abraham
Whom Satan hath bound
Lo these eighteen years
Be loosed from this bond
On the sabbath day?’

Again it was a rebuke which could not be answered. The Law of God was no foolish, unequal thing; it imposed no burthens merely for the sake of imposing them. As He had said before, it was always lawful to do a good work on the Sabbath day; and if to an ox or an ass, much more to a crippled daughter of Abraham.

The effect of His words was great indeed. Never before had he so completely, so swiftly, silenced the men who had found fault with Him. They had nothing to say; that they led their cattle to water on the Sabbath day they could not deny; that a daughter of Abraham was more than an ox or an ass they could not deny; that the Law was contrary to common human judgement they dared not say. Jesus had taken back the blame from the people to Himself and had justified what He had done. His enemies saw it, His friends understood.

‘And when he said these things
All his adversaries were ashamed
And all the people rejoiced
For all the things
That were gloriously done by him.’

CHAPTER XXIX

86. The Feast of Dedication

AT this point S. Luke inserts two parables which we have heard before, and which are the first of a series to be continued hereafter in his pages, through the whole of this Judæan period. They are expressly parables of the Kingdom; they stand in a class apart. All have the same bearing, the nature of the Kingdom, the conditions of admission, and the injustice of those who oppose it. Again we are compelled to ask ourselves whether this is to be taken as a repetition of what the Master has already taught before, and again we suggest that it is a resetting in its more historical place of teaching which S. Matthew has found it more suited to his purpose to place elsewhere.

‘ He said therefore
To what is the kingdom of God like
And whereunto shall I resemble it?
It is like to a grain of mustard seed
Which a man took
And cast into his garden
And it grew
And became a tree
And the birds of the air lodged in the branches thereof
And again he said
Whereunto shall I esteem the kingdom of God
To be like?
It is like to leaven
Which a woman took
And hid in three measures of meal
Till the whole was leavened.’

The passage concludes:

‘ And he went through the cities and towns
Teaching
And making his journey to Jerusalem.’

Now it is late December; the Feast of Dedication is at hand; He turns back from the point He has reached in Percea and makes His way, by slow stages, from town to town to Jerusalem, teaching and instructing as He goes along.

The Feast of Dedication was no very great solemnity; it dated only from the time of the Machabees, and commemorated the re-consecration of the Temple after it had been won back by Judas Maccabeus.

'And they offered sacrifices according to the law upon the new altar of holocausts which they had made. According to the time and according to the day wherein the heathens had defiled it, in the same way was it dedicated anew with canticles and harps and lutes and cymbals. And all the people fell upon their faces and adored and blessed up to heaven him that had prospered them. And they kept the dedication of the altar eight days, and they offered holocausts with joy, and sacrifices of salvation and of praise. And they adorned the fronts of the temple with crowns of gold and escutcheons, and they renewed the gates and the chambers and hanged doors upon them, and there was exceeding great joy among the people. And the reproach of the Gentiles was turned away; and Judas and his brethren and all the church of Israel decreed that the day of the dedication of the altar should be kept in its season from year to year for eight days, from the five and twentieth day of the month of Casleu with joy and gladness' (1 Machabees, iv, 53–59).

'Now upon the same day that the temple had been polluted by the strangers, on the very same day it was cleansed again, to wit, on the five and twentieth day of the month of Casleu. And they kept eight days with joy after the manner of the feast of tabernacles, remembering that not long before they had kept the feast of the tabernacles, when they were in the mountains and in dens like wild beasts. Therefore they now carried boughs and green branches and palms for him that had given them good success in cleansing his place. And they ordained by a common statute and decree that all the nations of the Jews should keep those days every year' (2 Machabees x, 5–8).

It was in the middle of the winter season, the middle of the season of rain, when work did not stop but travelling was difficult; for the Feast of Dedication there were not many pilgrims. But it was the last time before the end that Jesus would be in Jerusalem, and we find Him in the Temple during the feast walking under the porch that ran north and south, inside the outer wall through which was pierced the Golden Gate. He would have entered the Gate from the side of Olivet; before passing into the Court He would have turned to the left; as He walked to and fro in this porch He would have been sheltered from the rain. And there would have been many more seeking the same shelter; He could not have been alone.

Since the end of October when He had last been seen in Jerusalem the talk concerning Him had never ceased. He had left the people much to consider. He had spoken plainly, so plainly that they had wished to stone Him; by a striking miracle He had confirmed what He had said. There were some who believed, though few dared to own it openly. There were more who would gladly have believed had the authorities been with them. More again had the evidence before them, almost compelling their assent, but their will was against it; and these fell back on the old defence, the need of more convincing proof. It was still possible for them to find reason to doubt, to remain where they were, therefore they justified themselves in remaining where they were and doubting. They professed to be neutral, to be open-minded, to be fair to both sides; but the time had come when neutrality was no longer possible, and not to be for Him was to be against Him, however little at first they realized the truth.

These men gathered round Him as He walked in Solomon's Porch. They had listened to Him before; they had almost been convinced; yet had they argued with themselves that if He were truly the Christ He had never explicitly said so. He had implied it; He had led them on that they might draw their own conclusions, but under the circumstances they claimed that this was not enough. Others had asserted that they were the Christ and had been proved impostors; others had even done miracles; the true Christ when He came would surely vindicate His right in a way that would place Him above all these.

'And it was the feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem
And it was winter

And Jesus walked in the temple
In Solomon's porch
The Jews therefore came round about him
And said to him
How long dost thou hold our souls in suspense?
If thou be the Christ
Tell us plainly.'

Surely He had already spoken plainly enough; the final declaration that they asked for would be given later, but only when He had been rejected. Their time was not yet come; if He told them yet more plainly they would still have found a method of escape. A further sign from heaven, a fresh quibble to be solved; there would always be a subterfuge for those who would not. On the other hand there were the few who stood with Him, if not openly, at least in their hearts. These He must encourage, their flickering faith He must not extinguish; He seemed to take up the threads where He had left them on the occasion of His last visit as He

'Answered them
I speak to you
And you believe not
The works that I do in the name of my Father
These give testimony of me
But you do not believe
Because you are not of my sheep
My sheep hear my voice
And I know them
And they follow me
And I give them life everlasting
And they shall not perish for ever
And no man shall pluck them out of my hand
That which my Father hath given me
Is greater than all
And no man can snatch them
Out of the hand of my Father
I and the Father are one.'

It is surely not possible to listen to these words without realizing the depth of the character which spoke them. If ever man had reason for bitterness and rejection Jesus had it with the people of Jerusalem. Still would He not reject them ; He would not condemn ; He would continue to have patience, to find cause for them, to explain away their folly.

‘ You do not believe
Because you are not of my sheep.’
‘ Seeing the multitudes
He had compassion on them
Because they were distressed
And lying like sheep that have no shepherd.’

So it had been said of Him in Galilee ; it was no less true in Jerusalem. Let His enemies do against Him what they liked, they could never break down the bond of affection that made Him overlook their insults, and explore every way, every means to win their hearts. He was above their abuse ; He was too great to be shaken by their insults. His gifts might be rejected, yet was He ever ready to offer more. He stood among them unmoved, He could only pity ; their folly was so great that it had to be explained away.

Yet more. If they would not submit to the evidence of fact, or if the yoke He offered frightened them, then would He try another method. He would allure them by a tempting bribe. They were not of His sheep, therefore they did not believe ; those who were of His sheep not only believed but heard His voice. They were not of His sheep, therefore He and they did not know each other ; those who were of His sheep knew Him and followed Him, and He knew them, every one. They who were not of His sheep must remain where they were in their narrow life-in-death ; those who were of His sheep had already life everlasting and would not perish for ever. His sheep were His possession ; His sheep were His own ; they were the gift of the Father to Him, a treasure beyond price, never to be taken from Him for all eternity. We ask again what was the character of One who could so speak to an audience of carping critics, and yet overwhelm them with a sense of His strength.

In the fulness of that strength He gave them the answer to their question.

‘ How long dost thou hold our souls in suspense ?
If thou be the Christ
Tell us plainly.’

He would tell them plainly, but He would not use the word. He would tell them again who He was, but they should not be able to catch Him in His speech. He would tell them what was the true significance of 'the Christ', and that title He would claim for Himself; what they meant by it, the kingship, the leadership, with all its concomitant snares and dangers, He would ignore. He had made this appealing introduction; He paused and all were moved, some to believe, others to wrath; in the silence that followed, the words were heard clear in the porch:

'I and the Father are one.'

They had again received their answer, and again it was not what they wanted. But it could not be refuted; the only course open to its enemies was to give it no hearing, to assume that it was wrong, to form at once against it a public spirit which would have none of it. And this at once was done. They stepped from the porch into the rougher ground of the Court of the Gentiles, first one and then another. They picked up stones, one gave the lead, and like senseless sheep others followed. They were ready, or they pretended to be ready, to stone Him; but who among them would dare to cast the first stone? They had come to this pass before, more than once, within that same Temple area, and yet He walked in and out of its gate as He pleased. Nay, this time He did more. He let them mass themselves in front of Him; friends stood trembling by. He looked straight before Him, still He did not condemn; the same tender appeal rang in His next words, blending with the fearlessness that was written over His whole figure as He said:

'Many good works
I have shewed you from my Father
For which of these works
Do you stone me?'

Was rebuke ever more deserved? Could rebuke have been more touchingly given? We have had many instances of the sublime irony of Jesus, but is there any instance so keen as this? The good works could not be denied; they were part of His very nature so that they were now taken for granted; He 'did all things well'; the conclusion should have been inevitable. And yet they would stone Him; very soon they would do more; it was worse than ingratitude, we have no word by which it can be named.

Nevertheless even these men had their defence. Such men always have ; he is a poor traitor who cannot find a reason for his treachery, a poor liar who cannot make his lie look like the truth ; a past master in both will ‘ deceive even the elect ’, perhaps even himself. So was it with these men ; if they could deceive no one else they could deceive themselves. They stayed their hands ; the reminder of what this Man had done, and of what He was, made them pause ; but they soon found their reply.

‘ The Jews answered him
For a good work
We stone thee not
But for blasphemy
And because that thou
Being a man
Makest thyself God.’

What follows is difficult to understand. Jesus appealed to the Scripture ; so far as we know the passage to which He appealed was the eighty-first Psalm. In that Psalm it would seem that unjust judges are apostrophized and bidden to act justly ; in the course of the address they are reminded that in some sense ‘ they are gods ’, no doubt as holding and wielding the authority of God.

‘ I have said : You are gods
And all of you the sons of the Most High.’

Jesus takes these words and with them answers His accusers.

‘ Jesus answered them
Is it not written in your law
I said : You are gods ?
If he called them gods
To whom the word of God was spoken
And the Scripture cannot be broken
Do you say of him
Whom the Father hath sanctified
And sent into the world
Thou blasphemest
Because I said
I am the Son of God ? ’

Whatever to us be the mystery contained in the words of Jesus, it is certain that to those who heard them they were amply understood. They had wished to stone Him because He made Himself to be God; He had replied with words which only emphasized the claim:

'The Father is in me
And I am in the Father.'

What more was there to be done? As before, with all their threats of stoning, prudence taught them to be cautious. He ought first to be condemned; they must take Him into custody and have Him tried. There was a rush made to seize Him; but He slipped behind the pillars of the porch, out by the Golden Gate, and was soon away from their reach. His hour was not yet come; there were still three months to wait.

Jesus went down the road that led across the brook Kedron. He knew it now well; no road was better known or more frequented throughout the country. It was the road on which John the Baptist had first appeared, the road which Jesus had chosen for the scene of His story of the Good Samaritan. In this rainy season the rolling hills and deep valleys all around were clothed in green; to reach the Jordan ford would take a very long day. At the ford He halted; in a hut hard by, on the very spot where John had first begun to baptize, He took up His abode; He seemed almost to wish to begin again the work which had so far proved such a failure.

He sat there and the days passed by. He made little effort to preach any more; He waited for men to come to Him. And soon they did come. The memory of John in that neighbourhood had not perished; His own presence there in the early days had left its impression. In Judæa after all there were more truly earnest and believing hearts than in Galilee. These men had heard much since then of the doings of Jesus in the north. They had heard of the miracles and had been impressed; on the other hand they had heard of the little account made of them by the Pharisees. They did not know what to think. Still there was one thing in His favour which even the Pharisees could not venture to deny; if they did, so much the worse was it for them. John the Baptist was true, John was a prophet, and John had said that Jesus was the Lamb of God, was

He that was to come. If men, Pharisees or no Pharisees, would judge of Him aright they should begin from the witness of John. With John there could be no side-tracking concerning miracles, for he worked none; his word and himself had been evidence enough.

When, then, Jesus again settled by the Jordan, such men as these began to gather round Him. It was the days of two years ago renewed; it looked as if, now that the end was imminent, He would give them this farewell consolation, would gather them together to prepare them for the great triumph. Out of this people, it seems evident, were drawn the first-fruits of the Apostles' preaching after the Feast of Pentecost.

'And he went again beyond the Jordan
Into that place where John was baptizing first
And there he abode
And many resorted to him
And they said
John indeed did no signs
But all things whatsoever John said of this man
Were true
And many believed in him.'

87. The Number of the Elect

But besides these, others came too; unbelievers, half-believers, questioners who would not make up their minds; curious listeners, caught by the popular excitement, philosophers, intellectually amused by the new movement; men willing to take Jesus of Nazareth as a welcome revivalist, who had a power of speech above those of His class, who was probably a man of God, but for the rest was Jesus of Nazareth and no more. Such men would come and would discuss with Him. They would put questions to Him, well-intentioned enough, but in themselves little more than curious; not in the bickering spirit of the Pharisees and others in Jerusalem, but still vain and idle, and leading nowhere in particular.

And with such men, as with all others, Jesus would be patient. He would listen to their questions; He would answer just as far as it was good for them to hear; He would then lead them on to higher visions of truth which they might follow if they chose. A specimen of this kind of meeting the Evangelist gives us at this point. Jesus is seated near the Jordan ; the people are about Him, even as in the early days. After He has spoken there is a pause. In the midst of it a man speaks, one would say a not unfriendly listener.

' And a certain man said to him
Lord
Are they few that are saved ? '

Anyone who knew Jesus well would also know that this was a question of a kind which He would never answer. That souls were lost He had already acknowledged ; how many, He had never hinted. Such a matter was no man's affair ; his business was the saving of himself, and after that the saving of as many of his fellow-men as possible. And in that sense the Master spoke.

' But he said to them
Strive to enter by the narrow gate
For I say to you
Many shall seek to enter
And shall not be able
But when the master of the house shall be gone in
And shall shut the door
You shall begin to stand without
And knock at the door saying
Lord, open to us
And he answering shall say to you
I know you not
Whence are you ?
Then you shall begin to say
We have eaten and drunk in thy presence
And thou hast taught in our streets
And he shall say to you
I know you not
Whence you are
Depart from me
All ye workers of iniquity
There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth
When you shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob
And all the prophets
In the kingdom of God
And you yourselves thrust out

And there shall come from the east and the west
And the north and the south
And shall sit down in the kingdom of God
And behold they are last that shall be first
And they are first that shall be last.'

Most of this teaching we have heard before, but again it would seem that S. Luke wishes to give it its historic setting. It was indeed a lesson of much consequence to these intellectual Judæans; if they were not careful they might play with their intellectual questionings too long. They might be proud to have Jesus in their streets, to eat and drink with Him, to discuss their philosophy with Him; but to end with discussion, to come to no conclusion, might be fatal. They might pride themselves on their relationship with patriarchs and prophets; but to live on the past was a curse upon the present. It was a timely warning to these men, who were secure in their tradition, who thanked God that He had made them Pharisees, and not as the rest of men.

88. The Threat of Herod

About this time another ruse was tried to get Jesus out of the country. Long since we have heard of the conclaves held in Galilee, when Pharisees and Herodians sank their differences that together they might accomplish His destruction. What came of these meetings we have not heard; possibly such parties, so bitterly opposed, could come to no conclusion. When Jesus left Galilee for the country round Tyre, that alone was enough to bring about their separation. The Pharisees returned to Judæa to evolve independent plans, the Herodians scornfully ignored Him, content that He was evidently no menace either to themselves or to their overlord. Since He had returned He had gone to and fro as He pleased. The Pharisees had tried various devices but always they had failed; He had defied them to their faces, He had demeaned them in the sight of others, worst of all, He had followed them into their own stronghold and defeated them on their own ground. They had affected to ignore Him and had found that He could not be ignored. They had publicly taken sides against Him, and had thereby only weakened their own position. They had ordered that He should be taken prisoner, and none had laid hands upon Him. They had endeavoured to have Him stoned as a blasphemer, and never had one been found to cast the first stone.

Then they had altered their plans. They had come to Him as would-be enquirers, and He had exposed their deceit, even while He answered their questions. They had taken Him to their tables, and He had refused to be cajoled. They had all but offered to accept Him as one among themselves, and He had scorned their affected goodwill. He had come into their city and province when He chose; when it so pleased Him He had gone away again. For the sake of His followers, more than for His own, He had avoided general persecution; nevertheless, by braving their venom in the very Temple courts He had shown that He feared them not a whit.

Instead more and more was it growing evident that His hold on the people was increasing. Outside Jerusalem especially, in the towns and villages of Judæa, and perhaps yet more in Perœa beyond the Jordan, the crowds gathered about Him in increasing numbers. The enthusiasm of the days of John the Baptist seemed to be reviving; there was now the added fascination of miracles. Moreover of late His manner of preaching had altered. It had become dogmatic, positive, defiant, aggressive, even while it had never been more simple, gentle, sympathetic, attractive, inviting. Thus were the poor country folk being seduced from their allegiance to the Temple and its lords, and it seemed that nothing could prevent it.

But now a ray of hope appeared. For months we have not heard of Herod. Since his murder of John the Baptist he had hidden away in his fortress of Machærus, wretched and recklessly merry, defying God and man alike, yet eaten up with fear, hating and hated, yet living on applause and flattery, careless of everything and everyone, yet cautious and cunning as any fox. He had heard of Jesus long before this time, and had feared He was his victim, John, risen from the dead. He had heard of His miracles, and curiosity to see them worked had struggled with his fear. He had heard of His influence on the people, and had muttered something about it being dangerous to leave Him at large. This had reached the ears of the Pharisees; it was very welcome news. If Jesus of Nazareth did not fear them, perhaps He would fear Herod; for if Herod had not scrupled to take John, and put him in prison and behead him, he might not scruple, now the whim was on him, to do the same with Jesus. Such a report could be easily magnified. They would make of it the most they could. They would affect an interest in Him, anxiety for His safety, desire that His voice should not be silenced; anything would serve if only He could be induced to leave the country-side. Therefore,

'The same day
There came some of the Pharisees
Saying to him
Depart
And get thee hence
For Herod hath a mind to kill thee.'

But surely by this time they should have known that threats such as these would have no effect on Jesus. He who had openly and repeatedly thwarted them would not be likely to fear one such as Herod; if John had braved him even unto death, so certainly would He. Again there was indignation in His face. For once, the only time recorded in His life, He called a single man by a name that was contemptible. In that name He summed up that man's character.

'And he said to them
Go and tell that fox
Behold I cast out devils
And do cures
To-day and to-morrow
And the third day I am consummated
Nevertheless I must walk
To-day and to-morrow and the day following
Because it cannot be
That a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.'

The meaning of the words was significant enough. Jesus had defied the power of the Pharisees; He would defy the power of Herod no less, or of any other that might come between Him and His destiny. So long as it so pleased Him, He would go about doing good. He would die when He would, and where He would. It would not now be long before the appointed time would come; when it did come, they would find Him at their service in Jerusalem.

89. The Man with Dropsy

The indifference, the independence, the perfect bravery with which Jesus had from the beginning faced His enemies had produced a marked effect. Never once had He bent before them, always He had met them with the weapon of simplicity and truth. He had answered their objections, He had refuted their calumnies, He had exposed their insinuations. While He had always acknowledged their authority He had not flinched from denouncing their assumptions; while He honoured them as men He did not hide their faults. The Pharisee as such He respected, but the leaven of the Pharisees was the poison of the serpent. Between their threats on the one hand, and their affected friendship on the other, He kept a middle course. Where prudence recommended it, like any other man, He avoided the one, where human counsel advised it He accepted the other, but neither the one nor the other could turn Him from the path He had chosen to pursue. Fear did not make Him yield, hatred did not kill His love; flattery could never deceive Him, trickery could not make Him bitter; even when offers of friendship were known to be untrue and insincere, He did not put them away in disgust.

Hence it would almost seem that at this time He was nearer to these men and more intimate with them than He had ever been before. In the old days in Galilee they had merely stood on the outside of the crowds, affecting to have no concern with this religious upstart; now in Perœa and Judæa they were always His closest listeners. Then they were scandalized at the company with which He dined, now they invited Him to their own tables. At Magdala they affected to do Him special honour by bringing Him to dine among them, now it tended to become an everyday affair. Formerly they watched Him and made their comments openly; now they watched Him, as keenly as ever, but were more cautious in what they said. Last of all, while in the early days there were none who cared to stand for Him, now among the Pharisees were some whose consciences had risen up in His favour, and who in consequence had compelled the rest to be more careful in what they said or did.

We are not, then, much surprised to find Him at this time dining in the houses of the Pharisees; indeed from the manner of the descriptions one might judge that it had become an ordinary thing. If this is so, it is only in keeping with the irony conspicuous throughout the life of Jesus; while His enemies were plotting His death, while their hatred was becoming every day more determined, He brought them to His feet, making them feed Him and serve Him as He would.

One such occasion, soon after the affair of Herod, the Evangelist has preserved for us. It was again a Sabbath day; the meeting in the synagogue was over; Jesus as usual had taught, and had spoken as one having power. After the meeting the Pharisees had come around Him. They had treated Him as a friend and a doctor; they had asked Him to come with them, to break His fast at their table, and He had gone. So far, on the outside at least, all was well. But it was not all well within. With all their show of interest, and even of deference, they would gladly prove Him wrong if they could; let Him but make a single slip before their eyes, in word or in deed, and they would pounce upon it.

'They watched him.'

They dared no longer criticize, but they could keep their eyes upon Him. The obvious things they had used to say were now worn threadbare, but they would soon find some other matter of complaint; and he is a perfect man indeed who can live his ordinary life, and do his ordinary actions, and speak his ordinary words, and yet escape the lynx eyes of those who are determined to put him in the wrong.

Jesus knew this well. He despised it, but He endured it. He pitied these men, and returned them recognition for their service; but they need not flatter themselves that He was deceived. In dealing with such people there is always a double trial to one's patience; first in that they play false, second in that one must endure their gloating over fancied success. Because one does not retaliate, because one does not choose to expose them, because one treats them just as fellow-men, they congratulate themselves that their ruse has not failed and they continue. But this time, at least, Jesus would not let them think He was deceived.

In a corner of the room where they sat at table lay a man with dropsy. Obviously he was not there by accident; obviously, too, since it was the Sabbath, he had not been brought in to be healed. It was just another test case. They had put the temptation before Him to see what He would do. They would make no request; they would say nothing. Afterwards, whether He noticed the man and healed him or whether He did not, they would be able to interpret His action as they pleased.

The conversation at the meal flagged; such an attitude of mind was not conducive to conversation. In a moment of silence Jesus looked across the room to the couch on which the sufferer lay. He made no advance; He looked, and His eyes were wholly occupied, but it seemed that His thoughts were elsewhere. Presently, He took His gaze away. He glanced round the group of men about Him, Pharisees and lawyers, every one of whom had seen Him look upon the sufferer, and now watched with eager eyes to see what He would do. He was at peace and unmoved in their midst; He was independent of them all. He would anticipate their judgement; He would make them pass judgement beforehand; if afterwards they condemned, this time they should include themselves in the condemnation. His voice was firm, His manner deferential:

'And Jesus answering
Spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees saying
Is it lawful
To heal on the Sabbath day?'

This was indeed a turning of the tables. If the Pharisees were to be consistent with themselves, with all that their partisans had said and done before, and with even their own minds at that moment, one only answer was possible; of course it was not lawful. And yet there was the other side. Clearly He was ready to heal the man; the people who looked on would now expect it; if because of their prohibition He declined, the odium would be fixed on them. There was, besides, a further danger. They might object, and He might defy them. He had done so before; when they had spoken He had answered them and in turn had been unanswered. He had given them reasons in abundance for healing on the Sabbath, to convince them if they chose to be convinced. They were in a dilemma; they were already judged.

'And they held their peace.'

They fell back upon a characteristic Pharisaic weapon;

cunning knows better than any other when it is wise to keep silence. Craft is seldom caught in its words; it is more often caught in what it omits to say. 'They held their peace'; they were wise.

Jesus treated their silence as it deserved to be treated. He ignored both it and them; men might have said, from His behaviour, that for the moment He held them beneath contempt. But it was not so, as He proved later. They were not beneath contempt, even though they had placed themselves beneath consideration. He rose from where He reclined. He went over to the couch of the sick man. What He did there was hardly noticed, but when He turned away again the man sat up; the dropsy was altogether gone. Then, as if He had other things to do, He bade the man go home.

While out of doors the miracle drew the crowds away, to follow the healed man down the street, Jesus returned to His place among the Pharisees at the table. He would drive His lesson home. Often enough He had taught it, but this time there was better hope. For once these men had been silenced beforehand. They could not now complain; by their silence they had bound themselves; some among them were strongly drawn to take His side. He looked round on them again; He had them, for once, apart from the rest: with an appeal to what sympathy abode within their hearts,

'Answering them he said
Which of you
Shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit
And will not immediately draw him out
On the sabbath day?'

It was a simple question, but it was enough.

'And they could not answer him
To these things.'

For once a miracle had been worked on a Sabbath day before their eyes, and not a word had been spoken in protest.

We have seen many times how invariably Jesus followed up one grace accepted with another. No one ever took from Him what He had to give him but immediately He offered him more; no one ever accepted a lesson or a grace but another was at once put before him. So was it with these men. Though they had come about Him with doubtful intentions, though they had been silenced rather by His questions than by any choice of their own, still they had acquiesced, and for once a miracle on the Sabbath day had been condoned. They were not indignant; they did not drive Him out; they did not, as did their predecessors, go away protesting or swearing vengeance. They remained in His company; and in return He would speak to them words of plain advice, as of man to man, words material and practical, such as might well have come from one of themselves or from any rabbi; natural truth enough, but, if accepted, a foundation for much more.

For a Pharisee made great account of his social status. Not only before the people did he hold his head high, but even in the midst of his fellow Pharisees he was careful of his rank; with him dignity was virtue. At this very banquet at which they sat Jesus had watched the care with which they had ranged themselves, each one jealous of his rights; seniors, men in office, teachers of repute in their synagogues, all alike saw to it that they received their due consideration, and the place at table that was theirs. He seized on this, as was His wont, to take His discourse from that which was about Him. Gently He called their attention to it; there was rebuke in what He said, yet one may ask whether anywhere in His life was rebuke so softly given. The subject He chose, the way He handled it, the ease with which He spoke, all tend to show a milder atmosphere than is usual when He is dealing with Pharisees and lawyers.

'And he spoke a parable also
To them that were invited
Marking how they chose the first seats at the table
Saying to them
When thou art invited to a wedding
Sit not down in the first place
Lest perhaps one more honourable than thou
Be invited by him
And he that invited thee and him
Come and say to thee
Give this man place
And then thou begin with shame
To take the lowest place
But when thou art invited

Go sit down in the lowest place
That when he who invited thee cometh
He may say to thee
Friend, go up higher
Then shalt thou have glory
Before them that sit at table with thee
Because everyone that exalteth himself
Shall be humbled
And he that humbleth himself
Shall be exalted.'

His words were well received; they were such as they had heard often enough among themselves, of that practical, applied philosophy in which Pharisees were skilled. As elsewhere He was all things to all men, so here He made Himself one with them; with the Pharisees He spoke as a Pharisee. And in the same strain He continued; a little more elevated, perhaps, but none the less human and natural in plane and outlook. From the company He turned to the host; if what He had to say differed from the common standard of the doctors, it was only as one more original might be expected to differ from another.

'And he said to him also that had invited him
When thou makest a dinner or a supper
Call not thy friends
Nor thy brethren nor thy kinsmen
Nor thy neighbours who are rich
Lest perhaps they also invite thee again
And a recompense be made to thee
But when thou makest a feast
Call the poor
The maimed, the lame and the blind
And thou shalt be blessed
Because they have not wherewith to make thee recompense
For recompense shall be made thee
At the resurrection of the just.'

Yes, it was ordinary teaching not alien to their own; and yet its conclusion pointed to something more. It was a new reward set before them, though it belonged to their own standards and ideals; for in theory at least these men professed to look forward to the crowning after death. Nevertheless, in practice, not so keenly as this new Rabbi taught; for them the kingdom, the consummation of all, was chiefly a concern of this world which had hidden that beyond. Hence what He said, simple as it was, according to their own ideas as it was, came to them as an awakening; He had gone in at their door to come out by His own.

And it was all true; obviously it was true; not only was it supernatural teaching, it was the teaching of plain common sense. To give and to look for no return; to live for men and to leave the recompense to God; to set aside one's profit here that one might secure a place in the Kingdom; to endure in the present that one might rejoice hereafter, to become one day a member of the Kingdom whenever or wherever the Kingdom might come,—all this passed before the minds of some of his hearers, like a glorious vision to be longed for and desired. At last one of them could restrain himself no longer. Scarcely knowing what he said, enthusiasm making him spontaneous,

'When one of them that sat at table with him
Had heard those things
He said to him
Blessed is he
That shall eat bread
In the kingdom of God.'

Thus for a third time had grace that day been accepted, and again in like manner it should meet with its reward. On a former occasion, after a like confession, Jesus had said to the man who confessed Him:

'Thou art not far
From the kingdom of God.'

Now, with that same thought in His mind, He would remind this man how near men could be to the Kingdom, and yet would never enter. These Pharisees especially, how near they were, and yet were they for ever finding reasons why they should not come in. They needed a sign, the evidence was not conclusive; they had their own position to consider; as long as men lived on the earth there would always be found arguments persuading them to wait. This man who spoke, how little did he seem to realize that the Kingdom was at hand, that it had come, that there and then he was being invited and might enter if he would. The Master would warn him, gently, persuasively, but no less firmly.

The man had caught the beauty of the poor at the rich man's table. Jesus took his dream; He coloured it, as usual, with that which was around Him; He gave him one of those parables which even a Pharisee might well understand.

'But he said to him: A certain man made a great supper and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited that they should come, for now all things were ready. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him: I have bought a farm and must needs go and see it; I pray thee hold me excused. And another said: I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to try them; I pray thee hold me excused. And another said: I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant returning told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and the feeble and the blind and the lame. And the servant said: Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said to the servant: Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled. But I say unto you, that none of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper.'

The parables of Jesus in general, and perhaps this parable in particular, are familiar to everyone, and have had many commentators; in explaining or enlarging upon them we could say nothing new. Moreover such is not the aim of this study; it is in search of the living Christ, and must leave aside for others more learned the explanation of much that He said. Still in this parable there is so much emotion that the heart of the speaker is revealed at many points, and on these it may be worth our while to pause.

The master of the feast is a generous master, spontaneously generous, giving his supper without any special reason; largely generous, inviting many guests, and those of a rank obviously below his own. He is a master with whom his friends are familiar; so familiar, that they can afford to ignore him, so familiar, that they have ceased to consider the offence or the pain they may give him. They can pass his invitations by; they can give the lamest of excuses; they can go their way without a further thought, either of his rank, or of his lavish goodness, or of the claim he may have upon their friendship. He is a sensitive master; he feels things keenly; above all ingratitude and slighting. Like sensitive people he can hide his agony from those who hurt him; only those who are very near to his soul understand. He is sensitive, but he does not retaliate. He is angry, in the sense in which he is capable of anger, but he does not punish. Instead, from those who hurt him he turns to others who will not. He does not check his generosity; though angered he is not embittered; though the rejection of his gift has been universal, yet he does not despair of all. On the contrary, he becomes more spontaneous, more lavish, than ever. Whatever happens, let his friends treat him as they may, he will have his heart's desire. He will have the satisfaction of seeing his house filled to overflowing with guests, eating and drinking at his own expense.

Such a picture, painted at such a time, when the clouds were now gathering thick about Him, and the final rejection was imminent; when the invitation had been very definitely made and refusals had poured in from all around, betrays the nature of the Man for anyone to see. It proves a patient endurance which refuses to be beaten, a generosity ever flowing over, which no ingratitude can check, a breadth of vision and of heart which insists on doing good, and on finding ever fresh channels by which it may do good, unhindered by resentment, by what may be called a sense of justice, by any retaliation.

90. Discourses on the Road

For some time now to come we have only to record the new setting given to us by S. Luke of much that we have heard before. There is no time or place assigned; we are told only of the words that Jesus spoke, and these with just such an introduction as may seem to be sufficient. The Evangelist makes three divisions, first the multitude, then the publicans and sinners, lastly the disciples. The very nature of these introductions is significant, confirming the impression that has already been made as to S. Luke's aim and object at this point of his Gospel.

'And there went great multitudes with him. And turning he said to them: If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you having a mind to build a tower doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewith to finish it? Lest after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that see it begin to mock him, saying: This man began to build and was not able to finish. Or what king about to make war against another king, doth not first sit down and think whether he be able with ten thousand men to meet him that with twenty thousand men cometh against him? Or else while the other is yet afar off, sending an embassy, he desireth conditions of peace. So likewise every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple. Salt is good, but if the salt shall lose its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither profitable for the land nor for the dunghill, but shall be cast out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

'Now the publicans and sinners drew near unto him to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them. And he spoke to them this parable, saying: What man of you that hath an hundred sheep, and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until he find it? And when he hath found it lay it upon his shoulders rejoicing, and coming home call together his friends and neighbours, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost? I say to you that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance. Or what woman having ten groats, if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it call together her friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, because I have found the groat which I had lost? So I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.

'And he said: A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his substance, living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And returning to himself he said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger! I will arise and will go to my father and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am not worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants. And rising up he came to his father, and when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am not now worthy to be called thy son. And the father said to his servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry. Because this my son was dead and is come to life again; was lost and is found. And they began to make merry. Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and drew nigh to the house he heard music and dancing; and he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him: Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe. And he was angry, and would not go in. His father therefore coming out began to entreat him. And he answering said to his father: Behold, for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never transgressed thy commandments; and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends. But as soon as thy son is come who hath devoured his substance with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said to him: Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine. But it was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is come to life again, he was lost and is found.'

'And he said also to his disciples: There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said to him: How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer. And the steward said within himself: What shall I do? Because my lord taketh away from me the stewardship. To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do, that when I shall be removed from the stewardship they may receive me into their houses. Therefore calling together every one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first: How much dost thou owe my lord? But he said: An hundred barrels of oil. And he said to him: Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another: And how much dost thou owe? Who said, An hundred quarters of wheat. He said to him: Take thy bill and write eighty. And the lord commended the unjust steward, forasmuch as he had done wisely; for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And I say to you: Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.

'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful in that which is greater; and he that is unjust in that which is little is unjust also in that which is greater. If then you have not been faithful in the unjust mammon, who will trust you with that which is the true? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

'Now the Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things and derided him. And he said to them: You are they who justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts. For that which is high to men is an abomination before God. The law and the prophets were until John; from that time the kingdom of God is preached and everyone useth violence towards it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to fall.

'Everyone that putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery, and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

'There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day; and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who lay at his gate full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table; and no one did give him. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angel into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send me Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him: Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between you and me there is fixed a great chaos, so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, nor from hence to come hither. And he said: Then, father, I beseech thee that thou wouldst send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments. And Abraham said to him: They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. But he said: No, Father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead they will do penance. And he said to him: If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead.

'And the apostles said to the Lord: Increase our faith. And the Lord said: If you had faith like to a grain of mustard seed, you might say to this mulberry tree: Be thou rooted up, and be thou transplanted into the sea, and it would obey you. But which of you having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle will say to him when he is come from the field: Immediately go, sit down to meat, and will not rather say to him: Make ready my supper, and gird thyself and serve me, whilst I eat and drink, and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink. Doth he thank that servant for doing the things which he commanded him? I think not. So you also, when you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which we ought to do.'

In all these discourses, given to us by S. Luke alone, above all in the parables peculiar to his Gospel, there is obviously much that would repay our study, not only for the sake of their teaching, but also because of the light they throw on the character of Him who spoke them. Nowhere is He more vividly manifest than here. He is stern and unbending, though human prudence might have counselled Him to yield a little. He is dealing with shrewd men of business ; therefore with them He calculates the cost of a tower ; He foresees the consequence of conflict ; He measures the losses of a sheep against an apparent infringement of the Law. He watches the mind of the housewife who forgets all else for the joy of finding her lost money. He draws the picture of a rich man's scapegrace son, which many a Judæan must have known from his own experience, yet He draws it with a tenderness of feeling which the most embittered father or brother among them must have welcomed. Then He turns to His own, but so that all the rest may hear, and with a climax of irony, approaching to withering satire, shows them forsooth how much of everlasting life may be expected from friendship with and service of the mammon of iniquity ; in the end, by contrast, proves whither the worship of mere wealth must lead in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

Thus though of late the clouds have gathered thick about Him, He has lost none of His light, none of His insight, none of that sympathy with the minds of others which we have noticed from the first. Though more than ever He has been hemmed about, His patience remains always the same. Though He has been heckled out of mere malice, though He has been plotted against and thwarted at every turn, though circumstances have compelled Him to speak with ever more unflinching severity, yet more than ever does His tenderness appear alongside, as if the one demanded the other ; in the story of the sheep, whose finding more than compensated for its loss, of the prodigal's home-coming, giving joy that almost made his wandering worth while ; of the beggar lying in the bosom of Abraham, which made it after all a glory to have lived. In mind and heart, in breadth of understanding and depth of sympathy, it is always the same Jesus, now as at the beginning ; the more He is tried, the more does the pure gold of His human-divine nature shine forth.

But instead of dwelling longer on these discourses in detail, it may be better to pause here, and look back, and bring together, all that we have seen in the life and character of Jesus to this point. We have now arrived at the evening of His day. He is about to gird Himself for the last encounter. He has revealed Himself to men in His full development; what follows is little more than the confirmation of the end. Before the final tour, the tour of farewell which is to end on Calvary, it will be well to realize, if we are able, a portrait of Jesus as He stood discovered to the world on the border of Judæa.

CHAPTER XXX

91. A Résumé

LESS than three years before, on that very spot, a man had appeared who had proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom. Less than three years before, that man had prepared the people of Judæa; interpreting for them their own longings, giving them hope that at last the day of their salvation had dawned. Less than three years before, after due preparation, the King in due course had come down to the Jordan and had been crowned. He had come with nothing to distinguish Him; He had come as a labouring man among His fellows; He had stood as a sinner among sinners. Though a voice from heaven declared Him to be

‘The beloved Son
In whom I am well pleased’;

though the messenger pointed to Him as

‘The Lamb of God
Who taketh away the sin of the world’,

still in Himself, before the eyes of men, He remained no more than the Carpenter of Nazareth, poor and pressed down with the helplessness of poverty, meek and bound by the bondage of meekness, suffering and bowed down by the weight of human sorrow. From the beginning and throughout men should know Him as a man, whatever the risk, whatever the scandal they might take:

‘Blessed is he
That shall not be scandalized in me.’

Nor was this only an appearance, a show or a pretence. He would be indeed a man, as others were men. He would bear upon His human shoulders their sorrows and their griefs,

‘Made in all things like to man
Without sin.’

Their burthens should press upon Him, their agonies should enter into His very soul ; though He could do no evil, yet would He permit the powers of evil to have their way with Him in a manner that other men had not to endure. If He could not sin, yet could He be tempted ; if He could not do wrong, yet could He endure shame ; if evil were loathsome to Him almost beyond bearing, yet should the master of all evil have liberty to come to Him, to speak with Him as with an equal, to mock Him, to maul Him, to humble Him with those temptations which most humiliate a man. From the beginning, whatever else might come, men should know that

'It behoved him
In all things to be made like unto his brethren
That he might become
A merciful and faithful high priest before God
That he might be a propitiation
For the sins of the people
For in that wherein he himself hath suffered
And been tempted
He is able to succour them also
That are tempted.'
Hebrews ii, 17, 18.

With weapons such as these, and at first with no other, He enters on His campaign of conquest. Poor, He is at home with and wins all the world ; meek, He subdues all the land. Mournful, He knows sorrow, and enters into hearts that mourn, and comfort goes out to them and comes back to Himself. He knows the need of mercy and bestows it lavishly ; clean of heart, He hates sin all the more, and wipes it from the eyes of men, till they open their eyes and see God. In peace He walks the earth, and men walk with Him, and in His company become the sons of God. Together with Him they endure ; under His guidance and leadership they learn to

'Rejoice to be accounted worthy
To suffer something' ;

and when that lesson has been learnt, then is the Kingdom secured. Underneath all else, whatever may win the eyes of men to look at Him, this first character never shall be lost. It shall be stamped upon those who first come to Him ; its discovery and acceptance shall be the mark of a true disciple :

‘ Learn of me
Because I am meek
And humble of heart ’ ;

when all is over it shall be handed down for all time as the fundamental feature of His character :

‘ For we have not a high priest
Who cannot have compassion on our infirmities
But one tempted in all things as we are
Without sin ’.
Hebrews iv, 15.

‘ Who in the days of his flesh
With a strong cry and tears
Offering up prayers and supplications
To him that was able to save him from death
Was heard for his reverence
And whereas indeed he was the Son of God
He learned obedience
By the things which he suffered.’
Hebrews v, 7, 8.

And the method of His conquest is in full keeping with the weapons He had chosen. To the crowd about the pool of baptism He is a carpenter, a sinner ; through the lowly, meek exterior, faith alone can teach them to see more. To the first men who hear, and follow Him along the Jordan bank, He is just a Galilæan like themselves ; only when they have been with Him awhile, and the veil has been lifted a little, and they have been allowed to peer into the depths that lay beneath, have they come away breathless, saying :

‘ We have found the Messias.’

They come again ; they see more ; their goodwill is rewarded. Without force, without argument, without compelling miracles, almost it would seem without words, by the sheer vision of this Light of men, the Truth, the Life, with the drawing of the Father to guide them, they find new expression of the faith that is fast growing in them :

‘ We have found him
Of whom Moses in the law
And the prophets did write

Jesus
The son of Joseph
Of Nazareth' ;

and again :

'Thou art the Son of God
Thou art the king of Israel
Rabbi.'

Clearly these men did not know, could not have known, the full significance of what they said. They had the past in their minds ; they could not know the future. The Messias for whom all Juda was looking, the Man of Moses and the prophets, the Son of God sung of by the Psalmist, the King of the Kingdom yet to come, all this they could accept and comprehend, and with a noble faith could concentrate it upon the Carpenter of Nazareth among them. What it might mean they could not dream, for 'flesh and blood' would not reveal it to them. But for the moment it was enough. Meekness had made its first conquest of the land, the scandal of humility had been overcome ; men who could make that surrender could later be relied upon for more. They were men of Galilee, His own country. They had accepted Him in Judæa, while the Jews of that province, with all their acknowledgement of John, had passed Him by. To Galilee He would go with them, and they would go with Him ; by constant intercourse, more than by any other means, they should learn who this was whom they had owned as the Messias.

And first, as a reward for this first act of fidelity, He would confirm them in faith and confidence. Though His hour was not yet come, still would He work a wonder in their presence, by converting water into wine. The miracle of Cana stands apart, both in time and in significance. It is unlike any other ; one might almost call it a wanton and superfluous use of power, were it not for its relation to the last great miracle at the paschal supper with which His life was to end. Water into wine, wine into blood ; they saw and believed in Him from the first, at the end they heard and knew that what He said was true.

From Cana of Galilee He went down with them to Capharnaum. The weeks passed by while He was with them, and yet he waited. From Capharnaum at the paschal time, as would every other man of His degree, He went up with the pilgrims to Jerusalem. Arrived there, as if a new spirit had come over Him, He was stirred with indignation at the insult shown to the house of God; with a piece of cord for a whip He cleansed it, and the men who were with Him discovered a new trait they had not known before. The Lamb of God was also the Lion of Juda; the meek Son of God was also the intrepid King. He who would not break the bruised reed could shake the very Tower of David; He who stood to be baptized among sinners could purify the Temple of the Lord; He who was content to live with fishermen of Galilee could flash out defiance to the priests and doctors of Jerusalem. It was the beginning of a new revelation; the first instance of that paradox of Jesus which compelled them in the end to say that He was more than man.

Such had been His first formal entrance into Jerusalem. It was in marked contrast with His first coming into Galilee, and so the contrast would remain to the end. In Galilee the crowds gathered about Him as the months advanced,

> 'So that he had not time to eat',

and He taught them the word. In Judæa

> 'Jesus did not trust himself unto them
> For that he knew all men
> And because he needed not
> That any should give testimony of man
> For he knew what was in man.'

And yet in Judæa more than in Galilee did His most singular successes seem to take place; most singular at least in this, that they were more far-reaching. Though in Galilee the people thronged about Him, captured by His miracles, captured by the wonder of His words, yet it was in Judæa that without miracle or word He won the hearts of His first followers. Though in Galilee He sheltered a trembling Magdalen, in Judæa He was able to welcome a no less timid Nicodemus. Though in Galilee He poured out His all, yet it was in Judæa that, after He was gone, the seed He had sown bore the greatest fruit. He was gentlest and most generous in Galilee, but in the end was disappointed and left it; in Judæa He was more generally stern and His miracles were fewer, yet He hung about it to the end. He condemned Corozain and Bethsaida, and He condemned Jerusalem; yet who can fail to recognize the deeper affection in the final cry:

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem
Thou that killest the prophets
And stonest them that are sent to thee
How often
Would I have gathered together thy children
As the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings
And thou wouldst not?'

Or again when from the slope of Olivet He looked down on the city, and broke into tears, and said:

'If thou also hadst known
And that in this thy day
The things that are to thy peace!'

Contrasts such as these, in person and in action, we must be constantly blending together, off-setting one scene by another, if we are to grasp the character of Jesus; the meekness of the Man and His indignation, the wrath and the scalding tears of affection, the threats and the unconquerable patience, the weakness and the strength, the familiar lowliness and the commanding personality, the scorn of His enemies and the pleading responses to their bickerings, the avoiding of their machinations and the bold front exposed to them on their very Temple steps. The men from Bethsaida had already discovered Him to be but one of themselves; yet when they came up to Jerusalem they were little surprised that Pharisees and Scribes bowed before Him, and that a leader of the people came to Him by night seeking counsel. The Carpenter and the King, the Son of Mary and the Son of David, the humble artisan and the Master before whom all trembled, the attraction and the fear, the love and the awe,—both characteristics were in Him, both blended into one, and that with such perfection that none could say what feature most excelled.

Jesus left Jerusalem, but He did not leave Judæa. He would wait yet a little longer. John was still preaching by the Upper Jordan, and He would let men come to Him, guided by John, of their own accord if they would. John had first baptized by the Jordan crossing; at the same spot Jesus now succeeded him. Men came to Him, as at the beginning the two disciples had come, and He let them study Him. Now and always, more than by any other argument, it was by personal contact with Himself that He preferred to conquer.

So He remained, passively biding His time, for almost a year of this precious period. For thirty years out of thirty-three He had remained unknown ; for one out of three He continued to wait ; not until John was removed by the hand of Herod did He take His place as the Master. Then He began to move, and at once there came about another startling transformation ; He who had hitherto displayed mainly the spirit of seclusion and preference for the life of prayer, suddenly appeared as a man of action, an apostle. He began where the Baptist had ceased. At first His message was no more than :

‘ The time is accomplished
And the kingdom of God is at hand
Repent
And believe the Gospel ’ ;

yet must it have been said with a singular fascination, a strange, all-embracing sympathy, a breadth of vision, a contempt of petty differences, a recognition that every soul is something to be saved and blessed, seeing that it broke down the barriers that separated Jewry from every other type. For this is to be noticed. It was not a Jew, it was a sinful woman of Samaria who could first hear His word and say :

‘ Is not this the Christ ? ’

They were not Jews, they were Samaritans of Sychar who first declared :

‘ We now believe
Not for thy saying
For we ourselves have heard him
And know
That this is indeed the Saviour of the world.’

In the first great flash of His passing into Galilee

‘ The fame of him went out
Through the whole country
And he was magnified by all.’

Then came the reaction. The craving of His heart for Jerusalem, that He might gather its people to Him as the

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hen gathers her little ones under her wings, dragged Him back there on the occasion of a festival. The memory of the Pasch, when He had last been there and had cleansed the Temple court, was still alive in people's minds. Reports from Galilee concerning Him had come in. On this festival day He stirred them still more by one of the most striking miracles of His whole career. In Galilee that miracle would have been welcomed with enthusiasm, in Judæa it was looked upon with suspicion. Galilæans would have seen in it a proof that a prophet was among them, the men of Jerusalem knew that it stood for very much more. Had he been content to be a prophet only, Jerusalem would have welcomed Him; claiming to be more was a call to battle.

'Thereupon, therefore
The Jews sought the more to kill him
Because he did not only break the sabbath
But also said God was his Father
Making himself equal to God.'

Thus early, in Jerusalem at least, the significance of Jesus was grasped. In all the bitter contests that follow, whenever He returns to the Holy City, it must not be forgotten that underneath all the abuse, and complaints, and questionings, with which they assaulted Him, this more than suspicion was for ever gnawing at their hearts.

But not only by the highest in the land would He be rejected from the first; He would also submit to be rejected by the lowest. He came

'To Nazareth
Where he was brought up.'

To the people of Nazareth He announced Himself, not in the high language He had used to the learned of Jerusalem, but in all the simplicity of a Saviour. To the former He had declared Himself the Son of the Father, sent to give men life; to the men of Nazareth it was enough to announce His fulfilment of a winning prophecy:

'The spirit of the Lord is upon me
Wherefore he hath anointed me
To preach the gospel to the poor
He hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart
To preach deliverance to the captives
And sight to the blind

To set at liberty them that are bruised
To preach the acceptable year of the Lord
And the day of reward.'

And for this, too, He was cast out. In Nazareth they sought to kill Him no less than in Jerusalem, and that from the first day on which He came among them for their good. Death as a baby in Bethlehem, death in Jerusalem, death in Nazareth ; hatred, bitter and relentless, ranged in all three centres against Him ; if we would gauge the character of Jesus aright we must never lose sight of this constant, determined, merciless hatred which from first to last hung about Him, sparing no pains to counteract every good word He said, to thwart every good deed He did.

These were indeed discouraging beginnings. Jerusalem had failed Him ; He retired to the Lake of Galilee, and there, in the town of Capharnaum, He began again. For a time He went slowly. He preached at first only on the Sabbath days in the synagogue ; He let His personality grow upon His hearers. Then, when they were sufficiently prepared, in all His power He broke upon them. First He called four to follow Him more closely, Simon and Andrew, James and John. With them He came into the synagogue ; before the eyes of all He rebuked a devil and ejected him from a man possessed.

'And they were all amazed
And there came fear upon them all
Insomuch that they talked
And questioned among themselves
Saying : What thing is this ?
What is this new doctrine ?
What word is this ?
For with authority and power
He commandeth even the unclean spirits
And they obey him
And go out ?'

The effect was seen at once. Before the day was over, when the Sabbath obligations had ceased,

'When it was evening
After sunset
They brought to him all that were sick with divers diseases

And many that were possessed with devils
And all the city was gathered at the door
But he laying his hands on every one of them,
Healed them.'

It was the beginning at last. From that day He set out on His apostolate.

'And Jesus went about all Galilee
Teaching in their synagogues
And preaching the gospel of the kingdom
And healing every manner of sickness
And every infirmity among the people
And casting out devils.'

So He won them, and for a time the response was magnificent. It is now that we hear how

'The multitude pressed upon him
To hear the word of God',

so that He must needs get aboard a ship to teach them unhindered ; now that

'The fame of him went abroad
And great multitudes came together to hear
And to be healed by him of their infirmities
So that he could not go openly into the city
But was without in desert places
And they flocked to him from all sides' ;

now that

'It was heard that he was in the house
And many came together
So that there was no room
No not even at the door
And he spoke to them the word' ;

now that

'All the multitudes were astonished
And were filled with fear
And wondered
And glorified God
That gave such power to men
Saying, We have seen wonderful things to-day
We never saw the like' ;

now that

'After these things
He went forth again to the seaside

And all the multitudes came to him
And he taught them';

now that

'A great multitude followed him
From Galilee and Judæa
And from Jerusalem and from Idumæa
And from beyond the Jordan
And they about Tyre and Sidon
A great multitude
Hearing the things which he did
Came to him
And he spoke to his disciples
That a small ship would wait on him
Because of the multitude
Lest they should throng him
For he healed many
He healed them all
So that they pressed upon him for to touch him
As many as had evils';

now that at last the Evangelist sums Him up in the words of the Prophet:

'That it might be fulfilled
Which was spoken by Isaias the prophet saying
Behold my servant
Whom I have chosen
My beloved
In whom my soul hath been well pleased
I will put my spirit upon him
And he shall shew judgement to the Gentiles
He shall not contend
Nor cry out
Neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets
The bruised reed he shall not break
And smoking flax he shall not extinguish
Till he send forth judgement unto victory
And in his name the Gentiles shall hope.'

Nevertheless, during all this time, there was another side to the picture. Already we begin to hear more distinctly the rising of the tide which in the end is to overwhelm Him. For instance, quite easily, and that in devoted Capharnaum:

'It came to pass on a certain day
As he sat teaching

That there were also Pharisees and doctors of the law
Sitting by
That were come out of every town
Of Galilee and Judæa and Jerusalem.'

Before these men Jesus frees a paralytic of his sins.

'And behold
There were some of the scribes and Pharisees
Sitting there
And thinking in their hearts
They said within themselves
Why doth this man speak thus?
He blasphemeth
Who is this who speaketh blasphemies?
Who can forgive sins
But God alone!'

A day or two later, on a very different occasion, they are murmuring again.

'And the scribes and Pharisees
Seeing that he ate with publicans and sinners
Murmured
Saying to his disciples
Why doth your master
Eat and drink with publicans and sinners?'

It is now that the Sabbath accusation begins to be a regular charge:

'And it came to pass again
On the second first sabbath
As the Lord walked through the cornfields
That his disciples being hungry began to go forward
And to pluck the ears of corn
And did eat
Rubbing them in their hands
And the Pharisees seeing them said to him
Thy disciples do that
Which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days
Why do they?'

And again:

'And it came to pass also on another sabbath
When he had passed from thence
That he entered again into the synagogue

And taught
And behold there was a man there
Whose right hand was withered
And the scribes and Pharisees watched him
Whether he would heal on the sabbath days
And they asked him saying
Is it lawful
To heal on the sabbath days?
That they might find an accusation against him.'

He answered them; He healed the man; and with what result?

'And the Pharisees were filled with madness
And going out immediately
Made a consultation with the Herodians against him
And they talked with one another
What they might do to Jesus
How they might destroy him
But Jesus knowing it retired from thence
With his disciples
To the sea.'

Thus even while His influence grew among the people, nevertheless in Capharnaum, as in Bethlehem, and Jerusalem, and Nazareth, hatred unto death had come to hunt Him down.

Meanwhile those who were nearest to Him could not fail to notice a fundamental trait, which alone made Him independent both of His over-zealous friends and of His venom-spitting enemies. They had met Him first by the Jordan, and there they had seen Him in prayer. They had heard of His wrestling with Satan in the desert, and that had been after forty days of prayer. For almost a year after that He had done comparatively little. In Capharnaum, by the Jordan, wherever He had been, He had shown a preference for prayerful solitude; one might almost say that His life of activity had not been begun without an effort, and that even when it had begun it was not the preaching, nor the miracles, most certainly it was not the popularity or the reputation, that He valued most. Significant are the hints strewn throughout even this the most active period. In Jerusalem He is met alone in the Temple; in Capharnaum, and throughout the towns and villages of

Galilee, His favourite place of meeting is the synagogue; when He is not engaged with the people He is regularly slipping away to pray alone. Thus we read:

'And he came to Nazareth
Where he was brought up
And he went into the synagogue
According to his custom
On the sabbath day.'

Or again:

'And when it was day
Rising very early in the morning
Going out
He went into a desert place
And there He prayed
And the multitudes sought him.'

And in the same way a little later:

'They flocked to him from all sides
And he retired into the desert
And prayed';

until the climax is reached on that eventful night, the eve of an eventful day:

'And it came to pass in those days
That he went out into a mountain
To pray
And he passed the whole night in the prayer of God.'

Endurance of friends, equal endurance of enemies, forbearance, silent and ignoring, with those who knew no better; encouragement, gentle, cheerful, happy, fascinating, bestowed on those from whom he hoped for and expected more; equally considerate to rich and poor, learned and unlearned, sophisticated citizens of Jerusalem and narrow country-folk of Galilee, Pharisees and publicans, rulers in the city and lepers on the road, disciples and strangers, believers and harsh critics; intimate with all but depending on none, appealing to them to believe in Him, but not despondent if they failed; giving all He had to give if they would but receive it; inviting all, refusing none, striking friends and rivals dumb by His lavish and unconditional generosity; when abused for the gifts He gave never closing up His hand; sparing Himself in nothing, though He knew that the seed He sowed fell on stony or thorn-choked soil ; and underneath, like a thundering, awful, underground torrent, a life, apart and independent, of prayer and spiritual understanding that could not be ruffled by the gales and storms upon the surface—such is an impression of Jesus in the first and most active, yet perhaps the least self-revealing, period of His public life.

So He broke the ground, and on the ground thus broken the Sower sowed His first seed. Up on the hill behind Capharnaum He called to Himself His twelve Apostles :

'And when day was come
He called unto him his disciples
Whom he would himself
And they came to him
And he chose twelve of them
Whom he also named apostles
And he made that they should be with him
And that he might send them to preach
And He gave them power to heal sicknesses
And to cast out devils.'

It was indeed an act of high command. There followed the momentous sermon, the charter of the new kingdom, put forth as a challenge to all the world.

'And it came to pass
When Jesus had fully ended these words
The people were in admiration
At his doctrine
For he was teaching them as one having power
And not as the scribes and Pharisees
And when he had finished all his words
In the hearing of the people
When he was come down from the mountain
Great multitudes followed him
And he entered into Capharnaum.'

A few days before He had left the town, yielding for a time to the machinations of His enemies. He now returned, and none dared thwart Him. We shall see this defiance, this contempt of schemers, repeated again and again whenever it suited His purpose.

Jesus came down from that mountain with a new plan of campaign before Him. Hitherto He had been lavish in His generosity; henceforth He would be even more. Hitherto He had been content merely to reply to His enemies and rebuke them; henceforth the rebuke would harden into warning of their coming rejection. Arrived in the city He healed from a distance a pagan soldier's servant. He praised the faith of that pagan soldier, setting it up as a model to the Jews about Him. Then for the first time the warning is heard:

'And I say to you
That many shall come from the east and the west
And shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob
In the kingdom of heaven
But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out
Into the exterior darkness
There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

From Capharnaum He went over to Naim, lying at the foot of little Hermon:

'And there went with him his disciples
And a great multitude.'

There He met a sad procession. His heart was moved—the Evangelist expressly says it—at the sight of a bereaved widow woman. For her sake He raised her son to life and gave him back to her.

'And there came a great fear on them all
And they glorified God saying
A great prophet is risen up among us
And God hath visited his people.'

Yet the very next time we meet Him, when the disciples of John have come to Him, to enquire of Him who He is, when

'In that same hour
He healed many of their diseases and hurts
And evil spirits
And to many that were blind he gave sight';

though He answers their enquiry, pointing to the evidence before them:

'Go and relate to John
What you have heard and seen
The blind see

The lame walk
The lepers are made clean
The deaf hear
The dead rise again
The poor have the gospel preached to them' ;

yet does He conclude, with a note of unmistakeable disappointment :

'And blessed is he
That shall not be scandalized in me.'

And before that day is over we hear that first cry of agony :

'Whereunto shall I liken the men
Of this generation ?
And to whom are they like ?
They are like to children sitting in the market-place
And crying to their companions one to another
And saying
We have piped to you
And you have not danced
We have lamented
And you have not wept
For John the Baptist came
Neither eating bread nor drinking wine
And you say
He hath a devil
The Son of Man is come
Eating and drinking
And you say
Behold a man
That is a glutton and a wine-drinker
A friend of publicans and sinners.'

We see Him next in Magdala, the friend of the woman who was a sinner. Immediately afterwards we find Him thronged by the crowd to suffocation ; yet on that same day the bitterness of His enemies reaches a climax when they murmur :

'This man hath Beelzebub
And casteth out devils
By the power of devils.'

And He in turn answers them with indignation :

‘ O generation of vipers
How can you speak good things
Whereas you are evil ?

. . . . . .

Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man
It shall be forgiven him
But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit
Shall never have forgiveness
Neither in this world
Nor in the world to come
But shall be guilty of an everlasting sin
Because they said
He hath an unclean spirit.’

That day of abuse marked another climax. That men should be able to speak of Him in language such as this, within His very hearing, among a crowd that called Him its Master,—what a tale it told of the actual conquest of the hearts of the people about Him! Again He had failed ; He must alter His method. On the mountain He had spoken to them plainly, gently, pouring simple blessing on them in the simplest language ; henceforth, since they would not hear aright, He would speak to them in parables, in terms which only those would understand who were wholly with Him. The time was at hand when not the Twelve alone but all His true followers must be separated from the rest.

‘ The same day
Jesus going out of the house
Sat by the sea-side
And great multitudes were gathered together
And hastened out of the cities unto him
So that he went up into a boat
And sat in the sea
And all the multitude stood upon the land
By the sea-side
And he taught them many things
In parables

. . . . . .

And he cried
He that hath ears to hear
Let him hear.’

And along with this change came another. Hitherto He had spoken to all the world, to anyone who would hear Him; now more and more He confines Himself to the training of the Twelve. On the evening of the sermon in parables He said to them apart:

'To you it is given
To know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven
But to them that are without
It is not given
To them all things are done in parables';

and with this introduction He explained to them the meaning of His words, that they in their turn might interpret them to others. It was evident that from this moment they were to occupy His chief attention, and in time were to take His place.

'All these things
With many such parables
Jesus spoke to the multitudes
According as they were able to hear the word
And without parables he did not speak to them
That it might be fulfilled
Which was spoken by the prophet saying
I will open my mouth in parables
I will utter things
Hidden from the beginning of the world
But apart
He explained all things to his disciples.'

From this time, therefore, till the great day of Simon Peter's confession in the latter autumn of this year, the chief preoccupation of Jesus was the education of the Twelve. Not only did He explain to them apart the parables which he spoke to the multitude; He added other parables for themselves alone, parables explaining the Kingdom of God, parables to show the method of its working, parables in abundance to give them light on the task He proposed to set before them. Next He took them apart from the rest, and for them alone worked special miracles which they could not fail to recognize as peculiarly their own. In Simon's barque He slept, from Simon's barque, with the Twelve around Him, He calmed the winds and the sea. The Twelve, more than any other, He incited to faith, and yet more faith, even when it would seem they were showing to Him all they could.

‘And he said to them
Why are you fearful
O ye of little faith?
Have you not faith in you yet?
Where is your faith?’

In response to which,

‘They feared exceedingly
And wondered
And said to one another
What manner of man is this?
Who is this, think you
That he commandeth both the winds and the sea
And they obey him?’

Long ago some of these men had said on much less evidence:

‘We have found the Messias’
‘Rabbi
Thou art the Son of God
Thou art the King of Israel’;

now a new revelation was beginning to dawn upon them, which would lead them soon to a further and far more significant declaration.

Jesus passed over the water with the Twelve, away from Capharnaum and Galilee. This was again a sign of something new, for hitherto He had not gone out of strictly Jewish land. He came with them into the country of the Gerasenes; there before their eyes He showed power over devils, greater far than He had ever shown before. The Gerasenes feared Him; they asked Him to depart and He left them; He would seem to have been absent from Capharnaum scarcely more than twenty-four hours, yet were they hours full of growth in understanding for the Twelve.

‘And it came to pass
That when Jesus entering into a boat
Had passed again over the water to the other side
And came into his own country
A great multitude assembled together unto him
And received him
For they were all waiting for him
And he was nigh unto the sea.’

Thus was it clear that the crowds were still eager to have Him among them. And yet do we not already notice a difference in their tone? Before they had hailed Him as a prophet and a worker of wonders; now familiarity has begun to breed contempt, while there has been no uplifting to things higher. On that same day, as He passes up the street through the town, a woman's hand touches His garment and He asks who has touched Him. What can His disciples answer?

'Peter and they that were with him said
Master
Thou seest the multitude
Thronging and pressing thee
And dost thou say
Who hath touched me?'

So almost vulgarly familiar had the mob become. But that was not all. At that moment He was on His way to a sick girl's bedside. The news was brought that she was dead. The confusion that followed tells its own tale of the change that was rapidly coming over the people of Capharnaum.

'And he seeth a tumult
Minstrels and the multitude making a rout
People weeping and wailing much
Who mourned for her
And going in he saith to them
Give place
Why make you this ado
And weep?
The damsel is not dead
But sleepeth
And they laughed him to scorn
Knowing that she was dead.'

A few months before they would have understood Him better. Had they remembered what He had done across the valley at Naim, they would have been more reverent and waited; now the shadows were creeping over them. He raised that child to life; in childlike simplicity He dealt with her, taking her by the hand, asking that she should be given to eat, handing her over to her parents; yet after the miracle

'He charged them strictly
That no man should know what was done.'

From this time onward we have a tale of steady failure and decline. He goes from place to place, still with the same attractive pleading; but the men of Galilee had cooled in their enthusiasm and had little heart. He worked the same miracles, but to the people they were losing their spiritual significance. He preached the same doctrine, of penance and endurance, of the Kingdom, of the Father, of Himself, but the saying of the Pharisees had begun to tell upon His hearers, and they in their turn began to look at Him askance and to question. Thus, in Nazareth at this time, when again He ventured to return, and made one more effort to win His beloved fellow-townsmen,

'They wondered saying
How came this man by all these things?
And what wisdom is this that is given to him
And such miracles as are wrought by his hands?
Is not this the carpenter?
The carpenter's son?
Is not his mother called Mary?
And his brethren James and Joseph
And Simon and Jude?
And his sisters also, are they not all with us?
Whence therefore hath he all these things?
And they were scandalized
Because of him.'

Yet to all this ill-natured, deliberately blind criticism, what was His response?

'And Jesus went about
All the cities and towns and villages
Teaching in their synagogues
And preaching the gospel of the kingdom
And healing every disease
And every infirmity
And seeing the multitudes
He had compassion on them
Because they were distressed
And lying like sheep that have no shepherd
Then he saith to his disciples
The harvest indeed is great
But the labourers are few
Pray ye therefore the lord of the harvest
That he send forth labourers
Into his harvest.'

Nay more; since they had begun to make light of Him, He would send others to take His place; perhaps they would be more successful. Besides it was high time that His Twelve should be tried. They had now been long in training; let them see for themselves what they could do.

‘And having called his twelve disciples together
He gave them power and authority over all devils
To cast them out
And to heal all manner of diseases
And all manner of infirmities
And he began to send them two and two
To preach the kingdom of God
And to cure the sick.’

Before they went He gave them a last instruction. It was the lesson He Himself had learnt from experience; it was the picture He saw of His own life.

‘Behold I send you
As sheep in the midst of wolves
Be ye therefore wise as serpents
But simple as doves
But beware of men
For they will deliver you up in councils
And they will scourge you in their synagogues
And you shall be brought before governors
And before kings
For my sake
For a testimony to them
And to the Gentiles

. . . . . .

And you shall be hated by all men
For my name’s sake.’

Lastly, for there rankled in His heart that last accusation:

‘If they have called the goodman of the house
Beelzebub
How much more them of his household?
Therefore fear them not.’

Yes, He gave them this warning, bidding them not to count too much on success, bidding them not be too downcast when men failed them or opposed them. For His soul was very full, both of all He had already endured, and of all that was yet to come; of His own future rejection, and of the rejection that would be perpetuated through the ages. Nevertheless, in spite of all He said, He would not have them lose courage. He who had said:

'Come
And I will make you fishers of men',

would see to it that, at the beginning at least, their efforts should bear fruit.

'And they going forth
Went about through the towns
Preaching the gospel
And that men should do penance
And they cast out many devils
And anointed with oil many that were sick
And healed them everywhere.'

They came back happy men. They told Him all the wonders they had done. They were happy with Him, and He with them could still find happiness. Evidently then, with all the gathering of the gloom about Him, and with all the growing threats and warnings that of late had been wrenched from His very heart, He had not yet lost that peace, and fascination, and familiarity by which those with Him were made glad. Never does He lose this trait; once only, at the end, does the cloud seem to overshadow it. At the present moment we have one of His touching human features displayed, when He invites His hard-worked labourers to take a holiday.

'And the apostles when they returned
Coming together unto Jesus
Related to him all things that they had done
And taught
And he said to them
Come apart into a desert place
And rest awhile
For there were many coming and going
And they had not so much as time to eat.'

The first period of success had led up to the choosing of the Twelve and the Sermon on the Mount. The second, of reaction, had ended in the preaching by parables, and the instruction of the Twelve apart from the rest. We have now reached a third high-water mark, and He will stamp it with a third character. The people in numbers are still with Him. The very fact that some have cooled has made others more devoted; His declared intention to draw apart those who were true to Him has worked its effect. To these He would make one last appeal, by deed and by word; it would be the climax of His public ministry. He drew them away from the rest:

'And they saw him going away
And many knew
And a great multitude followed him
And they ran flocking together on foot
From all the cities
Because they saw the miracles that he did
On them that were diseased
And were there before him.'

It was on the north of the lake, whither He had gone by boat for His day of rest. He saw them on the shore; He came to them, and treated them with even more than His usual sympathy.

'And Jesus coming forth
Saw a great multitude
And he received them
And had compassion on them
Because they were as sheep not having a shepherd
And he began to teach them many things
And healed them who had need of healing.'

All that day He was with them. In the evening He fed them, five thousand men, not counting women and children, with five loaves and two fishes:

'And they did all eat
And were filled.'

The effect was momentous. Among all His miracles nothing of this kind had ever been seen or heard before; even the Apostles, looking on, thought within themselves that at last their Master had triumphed.

'Now these men
When they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done
Said
This is of a truth the prophet
That is to come into the world.'

It was in truth momentous; yet no less was it failure. These men might call Him 'the prophet'; yet would they not accept the full significance of that title. Their old prejudices held them down. The prophet, and therefore that king that was to lead them to victory, yes; the Prophet, therefore the infallible Messenger of God, about that they hesitated; and Jesus had again to defend Himself against His would-be followers.

'Jesus therefore when he knew
That they would come to take Him by force
And make him king
Immediately obliged his disciples
To go up into the ship
That they might go before him over the water
To Bethsaida
Whilst he dismissed the people.'

He calmed their over-zeal; in the twilight He dismissed them. He fled Himself into the mountain to pray; in the blackness of the night He walked upon the water through the storm to His own. He said to them:

'Be of good heart
It is I
Fear not.'

When He came aboard He received from them their homage:

'And they came
And adored him saying
Indeed thou art the Son of God',

still not knowing the full meaning of the words they used.

This double confession, one from the people and one from His own, He rewarded by a morning of miracles such as surpassed anything He had done before.

'And when they had gone out of the ship
Immediately the men of that place had knowledge of him
And running throughout that country
They sent and began to carry about to him in beds
All that were sick
And whithersoever he entered

Into towns or into villages or cities
They laid the sick in the streets
And besought him
That they might touch but the hem of his garment
And as many as touched him were made whole.'

In this wise He came again into Capharnaum, to make His last great effort. The people gathered round Him. He chid them for their want of faith, and they protested their belief.

'What shall we do
That we may work the works of God?'

He said they needed only to believe in Him, and accept what He gave them, and they said they would.

'What sign therefore dost thou shew
That we may see
And may believe?
What dost thou work?
Our fathers did eat manna in the desert
As it is written
He gave them bread from heaven
To eat.'

He accepted their challenge. For a sign He promised them better bread than this, and they responded:

'Lord
Give us always this bread.'

He said He was Himself that bread, and they paused. In spite of all their protestations, now they hesitated.

'The Jews therefore murmured at him
Because he said
I am the living bread
Which came down from heaven
And they said
Is not this Jesus
The son of Joseph
Whose father and mother we know?
How then saith he
I came down from heaven?'

But He would not now draw back. He was the Bread from heaven; nay the Bread that He would give was His very flesh.

'The Jews therefore strove among themselves
Saying, How can this man
Give us his flesh to eat?'

And when in spite of their resentment He urged His offer,

'Many of his disciples hearing it said
This saying is hard
And who can hear it?'

and

'After this
Many of his disciples went back
And walked no more with him.'

It was the point of cleavage; thus far the insinuations of the Pharisees had won. Jesus left Capharnaum with a broken heart; only once after this do we hear that He set foot in it again. As He left, the Pharisees and Scribes were again pursuing Him with their criticisms and complaints; and He only flung at them the words:

'Well did Isaias prophesy
Of you hypocrites
As it is written
This people honoureth me with their lips
But their heart is far from me.'

Indeed so strongly did He speak that the Twelve, for once, grew afraid. But He would not retract a word. He left the place, He left Galilee; He went out of the land of the Jews into pagan Tyre and Sidon, thence to semi-pagan Decapolis. There

'Going up into a mountain
He sat there
And there came to him great multitudes
Having with them the dumb
The blind, the lame, the maimed
And many others
And they cast them down at his feet
And he healed them.'

. . . . . .

'So that the multitudes marvelled
Seeing the dumb speak
The lame walk
The blind see.'

These half-pagan people! It would seem that they were willing to respond better than the more favoured Jews across the lake. For them, then, He would give a lasting sign of assurance. In their midst He repeated the miracle of the feeding of the multitude, that all the world might know that in time the Bread of Life would be denied to none.

The Pharisees had driven Him out of Judæa and out of Galilee ; even in Decapolis they would not leave Him alone. They caught Him on the outskirts ; by this time the Sadducees had joined hands with them. Here they came to Him,

‘ And began to question him
And they asked him
To shew them a sign from heaven
Tempting him.’

But He gave them short shrift. At present at least He would not argue with them. As He sailed away up the lake He warned His followers :

‘ Take heed and beware
Of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees
And of the leaven of Herod.’

What that leaven was, hypocrisy and sham, He would explain to them later ; there was nothing He more dreaded for His own.

For some months, from April till October, He moved to and fro outside Galilee. He had His Twelve continually with Him. Since the mission on which He had sent them there had been a long respite ; miracles a few, except the overflowing on the hill-side of Decapolis, preaching very little, avoidance but not fear of His enemies, prayer and solitude in plenty, all the time a deepening of influence upon them, leaving through these hot summer months the seed He had sown to grow within their hearts. More and more He had confined Himself to them ; at length He tested the effect.

‘ And it came to pass in the way
As he was alone praying
His disciples also were with him
And he asked them saying
Whom do the people say I am ?

Whom do men say that the Son of Man is?
Who answered him saying
Some John the Baptist
And other some Elias
And others Jeremias
And others say that one of the former prophets
Is risen again
Then Jesus saith to them
But whom do you say that I am?
Simon Peter answered and said
Thou art Christ
The Son of the living God.'

It was enough; at last by a single man He had been discovered and owned for what He was. His Church was founded; henceforth it mattered little what the world might say or do. His work was established never to perish; now He could march on boldly to His death.

'From that time
Jesus began to shew his disciples
That the Son of Man must go to Jerusalem
And suffer many things
And be rejected by the ancients
And chief priests and scribes
And be put to death
And after three days will rise again
And he spoke the word openly.'

At once He cut short His wanderings. He returned into Galilee; on Mount Thabor, to reward them for their faith and to confirm it, He showed to three among them a shadow of His Godhead, again during a night of prayer.

'He leadeth them up
Into a high mountain apart by themselves
To pray
And whilst he prayed
He was transfigured before them.'

For a month or thereabouts He hung about Galilee, no longer preaching, no longer working many miracles, even hiding Himself from the people; content only with deepening the faith of the Twelve, preparing them for the great ordeal, repeating again and again the warning of what was soon to come.

'And departing from thence
They passed through Galilee
And He would not that any man should know it
For he would not walk in Judæa
Because the Jews sought to kill him
And when they abode in Galilee
While all wondered at all the things he did
Jesus taught his disciples
And said to them
Lay you up in your hearts these words
For it shall come to pass
That the Son of Man shall be betrayed
And delivered into the hands of men
And they shall kill him
And after that he is killed
He shall rise again the third day.'

Four great agonies during all this time of waiting Jesus carried about with Him. There was the agony of failure; the agony of knowing that, in return for all He had done, those for whom He had laboured wished to have His life. There was, next, the agony of fore-knowledge of His doom, the ghost that always seemed to dog His steps.

'Altera sanguineæ mors est cunctatio mortis
Quæ ridet canis tincta cruore comis,'

wrote an English martyr on the walls of his cell, when waiting for his death; and Jesus looked forward to His doom in sympathy with every martyr.

Thirdly, there was the agony of having always by His side, trusting him in many ways more than all the rest, the man who, He knew, would betray Him; and would betray Him by means of the very trust He showed him. Long before this He had already said:

'Have not I chosen you twelve
And one of you is a devil?'

to which S. John characteristically adds:

'And he meant Judas Iscariot
The son of Simon
For this man was about to betray him
Whereas he was one of the twelve.'

Lastly there was the weary agony of the lack of understanding of the Twelve. True, they meant well, and therefore they would yet win through. They were devoted to Him, and therefore they would yet endure. They trusted Him, and therefore, when their own hopes were broken, they would still have courage to the end. But for the moment they were dull ; they were wayward ; they were intolerant ; they were violent in their zeal ; they were timid in face of real trial ; they could not lay aside false ambitions ; even in their dealings with Himself their familiarities needed to be rebuked. We may omit the examples in the past ; at this very moment, in spite of the clearness of His warning of impending doom,

‘ They understood not his word
And it was hid from them
So that they perceived it not.’

Upon Simon He had founded His Church ; with what result ?

‘ In the way
They disputed among themselves
Which of them should be greater
In the kingdom of heaven.’

He had appointed them ministers of His word, with added power to work miracles. They had responded by being indignant with anyone else who presumed to teach.

‘ And John answering said
Master
We saw a certain man casting out devils
In thy name
And we forbade him
Because he followeth not with us.’

He had told them, again and again, that forgiveness, and forbearance, and meekness, and endurance, were of the essence of the character of His followers. They could only accept what He said with limitations.

‘ Then came Peter unto him and said
Lord
How often shall my brother offend against me
And I forgive him ?
Till seven times ? ’

He lay hidden for a while and prayed, and some of them grew impatient.

‘Now the Jews’ feast of Tabernacles was at hand
And his brethren said to him
Pass from hence
And go into Judæa
That thy disciples also may see thy works
Which thou hast done
For there is no man that doth anything in secret
And he himself seeketh to be known openly
If thou do these things
Manifest thyself to the world.’

He had warned them of the Cross; from the very beginning He had taught them:

‘Blessed are they
That suffer persecution for justice’ sake
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’

Yet when at this very time a city of Samaritans declined to receive them, James and John could only reply:

‘Lord
Wilt thou that we command
Fire to come down from heaven
And destroy them?’

Even yet were they Sons of Thunder. So little after all had they learnt; much patient understanding and forbearance must He still use towards them, if He was to make them what He would. We have said that there is no trait in Jesus more prominent than another, that all in Him are blended to perfection. Still if we were compelled to select one in preference to another, we would choose His perfect understanding of all men, His infinite long-suffering and forbearance with every type of human being.

‘How long have I been with you
And you have not known me?’

and He could go on waiting till they did.

In this way He showed it to His own; as for others, one might say that what remains of the story of His life is but a continued manifestation of the same to all who came near Him, no matter how trying the condition. Follow the series:

1. 'Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews wondered saying: How doth this man know letters having never learnt? Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.'

. . . . . .

2. 'Why seek you to kill me? The multitude answered and said: Thou hast a devil; who seeketh to kill thee? Jesus answered and said: Judge not according to the appearance, but judge just judgement.'

. . . . . .

3. 'We know this man whence he is, but when the Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. Jesus therefore cried out in the temple, teaching and saying: You both know me, and you know whence I am; and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom you know not.'

. . . . . .

4. 'And the rulers and Pharisees sent ministers to apprehend him. Jesus therefore said to them: Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go to him that sent me.'

. . . . . .

5. 'And on the last and great day of the festivity Jesus stood and cried saying: If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.'

. . . . . .

6. 'Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying: I am the light of the world. He that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'

. . . . . .

7. 'The Pharisees therefore said to him: Thou givest testimony of thyself; thy testimony is not true. Jesus answered and said to them: Although I give testimony of

myself, my testimony is true; for I know whence I come and whither I go.'

. . . . . .

8. 'I am one that give testimony of myself, and the Father that hath sent me giveth testimony of me. They said therefore to him: Where is thy Father? Jesus answered: Neither me do you know, nor my Father. If you did know me, perhaps you would know my Father also.'

. . . . . .

9. 'They said therefore to him: Who art thou? Jesus said to them: The beginning, who also speak unto you.'

. . . . . .

10. 'And they understood not that he called God his Father. Jesus therefore said to them: When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father hath sent me, these things I speak.'

. . . . . .

11. 'Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him: If you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

. . . . . .

12. 'They answered and said to him: Abraham is our father. Jesus saith to them: If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill me, a man who have spoken the truth to you, which I have heard of God; this Abraham did not.'

. . . . . .

13. 'They said therefore to him: We have one Father, even God. Jesus therefore said to them: If God were your Father you would indeed love me; for from God I proceeded and came.'

. . . . . .

14. 'The Jews therefore answered and said to him: Do not we say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

Jesus answered: I have not a devil, but I honour my Father, and you have dishonoured me.'

. . . . . .

15. 'Amen, amen, I say to you: If any man keep my word he shall not see death for ever. The Jews therefore said: Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest: If any man keep my word he shall not taste death for ever. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead, and the prophets are dead? Whom dost thou make thyself? Jesus answered: If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing: It is my Father that glorifieth me, of whom you say that he is your God.'

. . . . . .

16. 'Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see my day; He saw it and was glad. The Jews therefore said to him: Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say to you: Before Abraham was made, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.'

. . . . . .

17. 'As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.'

. . . . . .

18. 'And they said unto him: Are we also blind? Jesus said to them: If you were blind you should not have sin; But now you say: We see; your sin remaineth.'

. . . . . .

19. 'Jesus therefore said to them again: Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.'

. . . . . .

20. 'I am the door; By me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and he shall go in and go out and shall find pastures.'

. . . . . .

21. 'I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep.'

. . . . . .

22. 'I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me. As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.'

In language such as this Jesus pleaded His cause before those who were bent upon His death. He could strike but He would not. Indignation might make Him, with a piece of cord, cleanse His Father's house; it could not make Him so much as retort when speaking in His own defence. Such patience, such incredible forbearance, such endurance of abuse, and misconstruction, and insult; on the other side such understanding sympathy, such attraction, such winning imagery; between the two such firm assertion of the truth from first to last, such clear vision into the future both of death and of victory, such exact interpretation of the past; all this makes up a mind that is more than human, and has no parallel in the experience of all mankind. Even at the time His enemies, blinded as they were by their determination not to see, knew that this towering meekness was more than their philosophy could explain.

'A dissension rose again among the Jews
For these words
And many of them said
He hath a devil
And is mad
Why fear you him?
Others said
These are not the words of one that has a devil.'

Such, when at last He had come to Jerusalem, had been His attitude within the very stronghold of the enemy. Now He left the city for a last campaign. He chose seventy-two to help the Twelve in preaching, six therefore it would seem for each. These went afield, and returned well pleased, as the Twelve had done before, with their success He received them back. He congratulated them, even while He warned them ; but meanwhile His heart seemed far away. In contrast with these minor successes, He thought of the towns that had once been so enthusiastic and had now ignored Him. He broke out, with a cry which might well have been thought irresistible :

'Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein were done most of his miracles. Woe to thee, Corozain! Woe to thee, Bethsaida! For if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago in sackcloth and ashes. And thou, Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted up to heaven? Thou shalt go down even unto hell. For if in Sodom had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in thee, perhaps it had remained unto this day.'

'In that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Ghost, and answered and said : I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones. Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in thy sight. Come to me, all you that labour and are burthened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet, and my burthen light. And turning to his disciples he said : Blessed are the eyes which see the things which you see ; for I say to you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which you see, and have not seen them ; and to hear the things which you hear and have not heard them.'

With this cry the portrait is virtually completed. It is strong as a tower, yet delicate as a feather, yielding as a blade of grass to every breath of wind, yet firm as a rock before the heaviest wash of water. For the rest the Evangelists, of these mainly S. Luke, are content merely to deepen the lines of light and shadow, in all consistent with the last impression. For instance, soon after this, down the high road from the city He is asked by a lawyer what is the great commandment of the Law, and he is made to answer his own question, that it is the love of God and the love of one's neighbour. He is asked who is his neighbour, and there is told that perfect story of the Good Samaritan.

It is at this time that we find Him accepting hospitality from some simple women of Bethania ; at this time that He is found alone in prayer, and makes others long to pray like Him ; at this time He sees a poor aged woman bent double, unasked puts His gentle hand upon her, and makes her stand up straight. While the enmity about Him grows ever more bitter, while He is compelled to become ever more emphatic in His retort, precisely at this time, and it would seem precisely in proportion, does His tenderness of heart reveal itself.

CHAPTER XXXI

92. The Raising of Lazarus

WE have already had many an occasion to mention the little town of Bethania. In this little town, as we have already seen, lived two sisters together, Martha and Mary. They were of independent means. Martha possessed her own home, Mary, the younger sister, from whatever cause, depended upon her and was less tied to the place. She could go where she would ; she took less part in the life of Bethania. Now we learn they had a brother, living in the same town ; whether he lived with his sisters seems very doubtful, indeed the language of S. John would seem to imply that he did not.

'Lazarus
Of Bethania
Of the town of Mary and of Martha her sister.'

He was a man of means ; he associated with the élite of the place ; he had many friends in Jerusalem and elsewhere ; he was much esteemed and loved by those who knew him. In fact the three, Lazarus and his sisters, would seem to have possessed among them that character, often found in small communities, which gave them a kind of leadership and independence, so that they set a tone to the people of the little town.

With this family it is clear that Jesus was on terms of special familiarity ; except His own at Nazareth, there is not in Scripture any record of any household with which He was so intimate. It had begun from a beautiful episode. Mary, the younger daughter, had been a headstrong and passionate child. In her early days the dull quiet of Bethania had tried her beyond endurance. The homely contentment of Lazarus and Martha had been too much for her. The call of the great city over beyond Olivet had lured her, the caravans passing up and down the lane had made her dream of other places and excitements which in

Bethania she could never have. Tales of the doings of Herod across the Jordan—his home at Machærus over the Dead Sea was almost in sight across the valley—had roused all her desires of adventure. In the end she could endure it no longer. She had left her home, and her heart-broken brother and sister; she had won her way in the world of pleasure and excitement, thanks to the good family from which she came, thanks to her beauty, thanks to her dominating character. Mary of Bethania had rapidly and easily developed into Mary of Magdala, for from Jerusalem, as she knew it, to Magdala was a natural descent.

And then there had come the inevitable consequence. Mary of Magdala had become the talk of the town; Mary of Magdala had become one whom respectable people avoided, shunning her very shadow as they passed her in the street; Mary of Magdala had become a byword for reckless defiance and laughing misery. She had won all and lost all; she had dared all and learnt all; and now her pride forbade her to go back. She had been the flattered creature of the world; it had drained her dry, and now she was just 'a woman in the city, a sinner', and no more. She had none to love her now, for what was given to her one like her could never mistake for love. Well, she had told herself, she could live without love; she had settled down to it, defiant in this as in all things else. Suddenly One had passed who had won her heart, and taken it close to His own, and cleansed it, and awakened it with a new glow, and made it a new thing. In an instant the old life had slipped away and she had followed Him; and He had brought her back to Bethania, and Lazarus and Martha had rejoiced that their sister

'Was dead
And had come to life again
Was lost
And had been found.'

Mary of Magdala was henceforth forgotten; the story only was remembered and recorded.

'Mary was she
That anointed the Lord with ointment
And wiped his feet with her hair.'

Such an act of grace could never be repaid. Henceforth, whenever Jesus came near Bethania, He knew where He would find a more than welcome home ; and acquaintance with gratitude grew into friendship, and friendship to intimacy, and intimacy into deep love. Jesus loved Lazarus, His friend,

'Jesus loved Martha
And her sister Mary',

and in the strength of that love the three, each in a special way, grew into sanctity, generous and noble and true.

And now there was trouble in the household. Lazarus had fallen ill, and the physician feared for his life. Every means had been tried, nothing had been of avail ; the sisters anxiously waited for the end. They talked to one another, Martha more than Mary ; their talk led them on to their friend. They spoke of His miracles ; of the sick He had cured, especially of the cases in which He had yielded to an appeal of confidence. What then of Lazarus ? If they sent the news to Him, would He not come and heal him ? Or even from a distance could He not restore him if He chose ? At least they might try. They would send a message to Him, and see what He would do. They would not ask ; they would trust Him too much for that. If it were the time allotted by God when Lazarus should die, and go to the bosom of Abraham, be it so ; but if Jesus would yet have him live, they would give Him the occasion to save him.

So it came about that one day, when the fever was at its height, the two sisters found friends who were willing to carry their message to Jesus. He was somewhere away across the Jordan in Perœa ; following the high road they could not fail to discover His whereabouts and come to Him ; in two days at most the messengers were sure to find Him.

'His sisters therefore sent to him saying
Lord
Behold he whom thou lovest is sick.'

'He whom thou lovest', nothing more. The women knew how best to reach the heart of Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless He seemed for the moment little moved by the message that was brought. He seemed to make little of it, as if He considered there was really no danger. He merely replied :

‘ His sickness is not unto death
But for the glory of God
That the Son of God may be glorified by it ’ ;

and saying this He stayed where He was, engaged in His ordinary work. Yet at this point, as though he would warn his reader against passing a hard judgement, the Evangelist is careful to insert the remark :

‘ Now Jesus loved Martha
And her sister Mary
And Lazarus.’

For two days more Jesus remained in the same place ; meanwhile in Bethania things had gone from bad to worse. Very soon after the messengers had gone Lazarus had died. That same day the sorrowing sisters had seen him taken from them to the rock-hewn tombs at the north end of their little town ; in one of these the body had been placed, and a stone had been rolled across its entrance. For the last time they had seen him. They had themselves wrapped the body with the bandages from neck to foot, and had put the face-cloth on the face. It was laid on a ledge in the cave and they had come away, with that weird blank about them which is so marked among the people of the East. Their message to Jesus had failed. Perhaps it had reached Him too late, perhaps He had seen it to be best that their brother should die. In any case they could trust Him ; they loved Him still no less ; no doubt when He next came by way of Bethania He would come to them and give them comfort. And yet when would that be ? Would He dare to come again for some time ? The country-side was disturbed ; in Jerusalem, when He was last there, His life had been in danger ; it was said He was delaying in Perœa chiefly to keep out of harm’s way.

Much the same were the thoughts in the minds of the disciples who were with Him. The recent experiences in Jerusalem had given them cause for much anxiety. The last had been most serious of all ; while feeling ran so high it was clearly unwise to go again into Judæa. Jesus was right in staying where He was ; not even the condition of Lazarus was cause sufficient to break down this prudence.

And as for the women, poor creatures, it would be hard; but some day He would go and comfort them. He had set the matter aside and He was right. He had gone on with His work, so far as He was able to do it, and they worked along with Him; nobody could question His wisdom, not even the good women of Bethania.

So they thought in their human way, but they had forgotten many things. They had forgotten that scene at the gateway of Naim in the early days, or that even more vivid day at Magdala. They had forgotten that crushing of the crowd at Capharnaum, when a woman had touched Him, and had been healed, and He in addition had blessed her; or when the pagan woman had won a cure from Him close by Tyre; or when again, only the other day, He had noticed a bent woman, and of His own accord had put His hand upon her, and made her stand up straight. And another thing they had forgotten; they had forgotten that of the Pharisees He was not afraid. He had avoided them at times, but He had never feared them. Whenever they had come He had faced them; when He wished to meet them He had gone into their very midst; when they had threatened Him He had told them plainly that they should touch Him when He chose and not a moment before.

What then was their surprise when, on the second day after the coming of the messengers from Bethania, when the matter had been almost forgotten, and when Lazarus must now either be dead or have passed the crisis of his illness, Jesus on a sudden said to them:

'Let us go into Judæa.'

At once their fears were aroused. Surely He had become distracted; surely His zeal was again, as so often before, carrying Him beyond the bounds of prudence. Once more they were tempted to say to Him:

'He is become mad.'

At least they must protest; they must do what they could to prevent Him from committing any act of folly.

'Rabbi', they said,
'The Jews but now sought to stone thee
And goest thou thither again?'

Why, instead of returning so soon, if He never again set foot in Judæa He would be giving to Judæa only what it deserved. Had He not Himself told them, for their guidance in the ministry, that if a place did not receive them they should leave it, shaking its very dust from their feet?

But Jesus was little moved by their remonstrance. On the contrary, a shadow of that firmness came over Him to which they had long since been accustomed whenever He was about to administer a rebuke.

'Jesus answered
Are there not twelve hours of the day?
If a man walketh in the day
He stumbleth not
Because he seeth the light of this world
But if he walk in the night
He stumbleth
Because the light is not in him.'

They were mysterious words enough; He was fond of the words light and darkness. Before, He had said that while it was yet day He must work, that the hour cometh when no man could work. This at least they knew He meant, that His day was not yet done, that not yet had come 'their hour and the powers of darkness', and that therefore He would go on working. He would move where His Father led Him, no matter what His enemies might say. They were therefore silent; they could only submit and make their preparations for departure. At first it had not occurred to them to couple this sudden decision with the message from Bethania which had come two days before. But Jesus soon enlightened them. They all knew Lazarus well, for he had often entertained them at his house; He would remind them of him.

'These things he said
And after that he said to them
Lazarus our friend sleepeth
But I go
That I may wake him out of sleep.'

This was then the explanation. They knew, by their own experience they well knew, what Jesus would do for a friend; once when He had said He would lay down His life for only one they had felt in their hearts that He did not exaggerate. And so it was now with Lazarus, with

Lazarus His friend, with Lazarus whom He loved along with his sisters. Lazarus was ill with some kind of sleepy sickness, and it was only like Jesus to risk His own life that He might go and heal him. They took courage at His words; all would be well after all; Lazarus would recover, Jesus would be safe, for nobody would dare to touch Him at the moment of His working a miracle.

'His disciples therefore said
Lord
If he sleep
He shall do well.'

It is strange how little, after all these months, reaching into years, of training, the Twelve understood whenever Jesus spoke in figurative language or in language out of the common. Even before the day when He had begun to preach in parables they had been used to His practice; since that day they had heard almost nothing else. But above all had He given new meaning to these words, light and life, sleeping and waking. He had raised a girl to life, saying she was only asleep. In the great sermon at Capharnaum He had expanded the meaning of life till it reached infinity. They had discussed these things among themselves; they had even learnt to use the terms in their own way. They had said to Him:

'Thou hast the words of eternal life';

yet on such occasions as the present, when Jesus unexpectedly played again with the words, they failed to grasp a shadow of His meaning.

They were very literal-minded, these fishermen of Galilee. They could not see far; they were men of one idea and of little imagination; they called for infinite patience.

And they received it; in abundance they received it; He would not be angry with them; He would not blame them because in spite of past lessons they had failed to understand Him now. With the peaceful endurance of a perfect master He unravelled His own words for them, and then gave them more.

'But Jesus spoke of his death
And they thought
That he spoke of the repose of sleep
Then therefore Jesus said to them plainly

Lazarus is dead
And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there
That you may believe
But let us go to him.'

Go to Lazarus dead? What could He mean? Glad that He was not there for their sakes? What could it matter to them? That they might believe? If Jesus had saved Lazarus from death, and they had been there to witness it, then indeed they might have believed all the more. But now he was dead and buried, how could a mere visit to his tomb add to their belief? Certainly Jesus spoke in mysteries.

Still He was evidently minded to go, and He had invited them to make the journey with Him. It might be a perilous adventure; they would almost certainly be stoned; on the other hand at such a time and after such an invitation it was hard to refuse. Each looked at it in his own way; none were happy about it. Among them was Thomas, called the Twin; the man whose words were few but those were usually emphatic, whose ideas were limited but they were very downright; the man not given to be optimistic, but all the more thorough both for good and evil. He saw the results through his own glasses. They might die; well, let them die. If they did they would die with Him, and that at least would be loyal.

'Thomas therefore who is called Didymus
Said to his fellow-disciples
Let us also go
That we may die with him.'

Poor Thomas! When the dread day actually came, and his Master did die, Thomas was not there to die with Him. Nor when his Master rose again did he easily rise with Him. Yet can we not condemn. When faith revived, it seemed to see further than the rest. He was then the first to say:

'My Lord and my God!'

And to-day the name of Thomas is remembered on the mission field more than that of any other of the Twelve. In the end after all he did 'die with Him'.

The party came down through Perœa and crossed the Jordan. They came leisurely; Jesus seemed to loiter on the way. He passed up through Jericho. There the news of His coming began to go ahead of Him. At the same time it was told to Him that He was much too late; Lazarus had already been four days dead and buried. During these days the mourning had been going on with full Eastern ceremony. Friends had come down in numbers from Jerusalem, for Lazarus had many friends there, and the house of Martha and Mary was filled every day with silent mourners seated about on the ground, expressing their sorrow by their presence. In the inner chambers came from time to time the wailing of the hired women. Martha and Mary sat apart, sometimes welcoming the guests, sometimes seeing that refreshments were provided, sometimes bowing their gratitude and farewell as a guest who thought he had fulfilled his task rose from the ground, and put his hand to his forehead, and inclined his body, and departed without a word. The mourning for Lazarus was worthy of his rank; all Bethania took part in it.

Such was the proceeding in Martha's house when Jesus came near the little village. Deliberately He did not enter it; He halted at some distance without, down the road. But the message was soon brought in to Martha that He was there. Immediately she seemed to awaken as from a stupor. Naturally active-minded as she was, it was a relief to be freed from this intolerable stillness. There was no resentment at the thought that He had apparently neglected her message, that He had loitered, that He had come too late. If Jesus loved Martha, Martha loved Jesus, and she could trust Him, and believe in Him, and remain His friend whatever He might choose to do. She rose from the place where she sat. Often she had done this before, for she was mistress of the house and had to attend to many things; therefore the mourners scarcely noticed it. Mary her sister sat on. Somehow, though she was the younger, now as always she was the central figure; and the friends sat on mourning with her.

Martha left the house and hurried down the road across the little valley to the east. There she saw the group of Jesus and His Twelve; one might have said He was waiting for her. As soon as she arrived the followers made way for her. They knew who she was, they knew her sorrow, they would gladly show their sympathy; above all they would admit her to where she would most surely find consolation. Whatever else they had failed to learn, this lesson at least they had long since learnt.

‘Come to me
All you that labour and are burthened
And I will refresh you.’

She came into His presence, they greeted one another as friends would; then at once, her mind full of only one thought,

‘Martha said to Jesus
Lord
If thou hadst been here
My brother had not died.’

There followed the enlightenment which we have already noticed several times before; to acknowledge one’s belief has invariably led to further understanding. It was so with the first disciples, so with Nicodemus, so with the Woman at the Well of Jacob, so with the Ruler of Capharnaum. It occurred in many cases of miracles; the most notable of late had been the blind man cured in the streets of Jerusalem. And Martha was of the same character. She expressed her faith in the healing power of Jesus, and at once her eyes were opened to see more. What it was she did not dare to think; only in some vague way she knew that He who stood before her was her Friend, and that in the end, now that He was near, all would be well. Almost blindly, not knowing what she meant, she went on:

‘But now also I know
That whatsoever thou shalt ask of God
God will give it to thee.’

It was a second and a further act of faith, and such an act could never go unrewarded. Jesus looked at her; many things in the past she had done for Him, now He could make her an abundant return. With that firm assurance characteristic of Him on such occasions as this,

‘Jesus said to her
Thy brother shall rise again.’

She could not understand; how was it to be expected that she should? Dead men did not rise; even Jesus had not raised to life a body that was both dead and buried. Evidently He was speaking in the sense in which He had often spoken. He was speaking of the next life, He was speaking of the last great resurrection ; He was reminding her that life was short, and that there would come a time when she and Lazarus would meet again. She would tell Him that she understood.

‘ Martha saith to him
I know that he shall rise again
In the resurrection at the last day.’

It was again an occasion when He spoke ‘ as one having authority ’, compelling faith in men of goodwill, even though what He said was all mystery. For a moment He seemed to play with words, above all with that word ‘ life ’ of which He was so fond. Solemnly He pronounced His claim :

‘ Jesus said to her
I am the resurrection
And the life
He that believeth in me
Although he be dead
Shall live
And everyone that liveth
And believeth in me
Shall not die for ever
Believest thou this ? ’

What could poor Martha answer ? She was a practical woman ; her mind was not well attuned to such mysterious language. Others more holy, or more learned, or more experienced in the teaching of Jesus might understand what He meant ; for her it was enough that He said it, and therefore, whatever its meaning, it was certainly true. She could go no further ; she could proclaim her faith in Him to the fullest of her power, and then abide by the result.

‘ She saith to Him
Yea, Lord
I have believed
That thou art Christ
The Son of the living God
Who art come into this world.’

‘Thou art the Son of God
Thou art the King of Israel.’

‘Indeed thou art the Son of God.’

‘We know and have believed
That thou art the Christ
The Son of God.’

‘Thou art the Christ
The Son of the living God.’

We have watched the revelation growing on those who were near Him; now for the first time we have it definitely from the lips of a woman. She spoke in the same words that had been used by Peter; we ask ourselves whether already this had become a formula of faith, the first article of faith in the Church:

‘I believe in God
The Father Almighty
And in Jesus Christ
His only Son
Our Lord.’

For a little while, it is clear, Jesus and Martha spoke to each other apart. Womanlike, she had her tale to tell; the anxiety while her brother was ill, the hope disappointed, the death, the burial, the mourning, the blank. Then there was her sister Mary. According to her deeper nature she had taken the loss even more to her heart; because of her independent nature she had made nothing of all comfort. Martha was afraid she would droop into melancholy. And Jesus-like, He had His comfort to give. He could listen; He could throw in a word here and there; in His own mysterious way He could leave in her soul a sense of peace, and security, and hope unaccountable. And when Mary's name was mentioned He would show even greater interest. He would enquire about her, because she was so troubled He too would let trouble be seen upon His face. He would ask that she might be sent to Him; perhaps He could comfort her when no other comfort availed.

This was enough; the thought of Mary easily made Martha set aside sorrow of her own. She must hurry back and bring her to Him; in her consolation she would find consolation for herself. She rose and hurried away, up the lane, across the village, into the house of mourning. Mary was still where she had left her, listless, broken; the mourners sat around unable to speak a word. Martha came beside her; she whispered in her ear:

'The Master is come', she said
'And calleth for thee.'

The words acted like magic. Mary sat up; there was life and fire again in her eyes, the same that had of old fascinated men, that had defied them when they despised her, that in the days of her conversion had compelled them to respect her, that had won back reverence and love even from her brother and sister, that had made all men feel that with all her faults she was a queen, born to command and to lead, who would and could do nothing ignobly. She sat up; she cared nothing for the mourners about her. Presently she rose from her couch, threw the end of her shawl over her hair, and ran out from the room by the door by which Martha had entered. The mourners looked on astonished; such rapid changes in a house of lamentation were unusual. But then Mary herself was unusual, and she was easily excused. No doubt her grief was too much for her; she had had an excessive paroxysm; no doubt in her agony she had gone to relieve her feelings at the door of the tomb itself.

'The Jews therefore who were with her in the house
And comforted her
When they saw Mary
That she rose up speedily
And went out
Followed her saying
She goeth to the grave
To weep there.'

The group of mourners rose and followed Mary, and Martha was left alone. But once outside the house Mary did not take the way across the town to the grave. She went down to the main high road; in her eagerness she almost ran. When the group came to a spot where they were able to look along the lane the mystery was solved. There, on the rising ground beyond, were the well-known figures of the companions of Jesus, and therefore without any doubt He was among them.

Mary too saw them and hurried all the more. Soon she was among them; if they made room for Martha much more did they make room for her. She passed through their midst, taking no notice of anyone about her. Her eyes caught sight of Him; tears of gladness mingled with the tears of her grief. Instinctively she fell at His feet as she had done more than once before; there of old the sinner had found her consolation, there the contemplative had found her vision, there now the mourner would find her comfort. The Mary of Magdala was still in the heart of the Mary of Bethania.

'When Mary therefore was come where Jesus was
Seeing him
She fell down at his feet
And saith to him
Lord
If thou hadst been here
My brother had not died.'

This time Jesus did not try her as He had tried her sister. There was, then as on all other occasions, no need to try Mary; whatever she was, sinner or saint or merely friend, Mary was too downright, too independent to be doubted. Instead there was the fact that she was weeping and kneeling at His feet. Mary had wept before, and at the risk of His own reputation He had dried her tears. She had sat at His feet before, and He had praised her for it; now she was both weeping and lying at His feet; and if He had raised a youth to life to stop an unknown widow's tears, something must be done for Mary. There were the other mourners too. These were not just official mourners only; they were friends of Lazarus, they were friends of Mary. Many of them had come down from Jerusalem as an expression of their real grief. He who could have compassion on an unresponsive multitude, could have compassion on mourners; He who had said,

'Blessed are they that mourn
For they shall be comforted',

knew by sympathy what suffering could mean. He saw their tears and His own began to flow; He heard their lamentations and He too began to lament; He realized their sense of loss, and at once began to feel with them what a true friend had been taken from Him by the death of Lazarus. He became one with them ; He sorrowed with them ; with them He would make a pilgrimage of mourning to the tomb.

'Jesus therefore
When he saw her weeping
And the Jews that were come with her weeping
Groaned in the spirit
And troubled himself and said
Where have you laid him ?'

The question alone was a relief, and as a relief it was eagerly answered.

'Lord
Come and see',

they said, and immediately began to lead Him to the spot. It was one among other rock-tombs to the north-east of the little town ; from where the group started, lower down the valley, there was no need to enter the town to reach it. As they went along the signs of distress on the face of Jesus grew greater. The tears began to flow from His eyes :

'And Jesus wept.'

And here it is worth our while to remember, first that Jesus could not pretend, second, that already at least once He had shown His contempt for the false mourning prevalent on such occasions. Jesus therefore wept, because humanly He was affected ; He wept as others weep who suffer ; He wept because in a true sense He could not help it ; He wept because Mary wept, because the mourners wept, because He Himself loved Lazarus, and Lazarus was dead. All this the onlookers recognized as they saw Him break down before them. He wept because He cared.

'The Jews therefore said
Behold how He loved him.'

Yet this did but raise a further question. If He cared so much for His friend Lazarus, could He not have done something for him ? He had healed the blind men up in the city, and that without any special provocation. He was said to have healed many who had been sick and disabled. Would it have been impossible for Him to have saved Lazarus betimes, and thus have prevented all this trouble, both for Himself and for His friends?

'But some of them said
Could not he
That opened the eyes of the man born blind
Have caused that this man should not die?'

It was strange; perhaps after all His powers were more limited than His friends suspected; perhaps after all the Pharisees were right.

So the whispered conversation went on in the little group behind Him, as Jesus made His way across the high road, and up the slope of Olivet, to where the rock-cut tombs were situated. They were of the usual type; hollows in the mountain shaped into square chambers; some of two rooms, others of only one; at the farthest end, if the tomb was but for one, a ledge cut into the rock to hold the body; in others ledges for two or more. Here, on the day of death, the corpse was placed. Usually a day or two was left before the entrance was sealed up, for it was sometimes possible that the person was in a trance and not dead. Before the fourth day they could be certain; spices would be added to the corpse, and then finally the stone was rolled to the entrance and sealed. So it had happened with Lazarus; two days ago it would still have been possible to see the body, but now the door had been closed.

They came before the sealed entrance; as they drew near Jesus showed further signs of distress.

'Jesus therefore
Again groaning in himself
Cometh to the sepulchre.'

He seemed surprised that it was already closed.

'Jesus saith
Take away the stone.'

Evidently, thought some, He had forgotten, or had not noticed, how long Lazarus had been dead. A tomb was never left open so long; before the fourth day was over it was always closed for good. The tomb belonged to Martha. By this time she had come down from her house and joined the company; it was for her to explain to the Master the mistake He was making. With her practical sense she gave Him her reason ; that would be enough.

‘ Martha
The sister of him that was dead
Saith to him
Lord
By this time he stinketh
For he is now of four days.’

But He was not moved ; He showed no sign of altering His mind. Instead, He looked at her, as He had looked at her with that convincing assurance down the lane, and

‘ Saith to her
Did I not say to thee
That if thou believe
Thou shalt see the glory of God ? ’

What could He mean ? A suspicion came into her thoughts, but she dismissed it at once as absurd. ‘ The glory of God ’ ? That could not have reference to Lazarus. Something wonderful was about to happen, that she now knew ; but what it would be her practical mind would wait and learn. He had asked that the stone might be removed ; she nodded her consent to the men about her. At once some men first broke the seal, then with crow-bars lifted up the round stone and rolled it over into its socket. The passage was black in front of them ; what was inside none could see. In any case the ledge on which the body lay was at the further end and round the side, visible only to one who stood inside the room. There was silence all round. He had done this unusual thing, He had ordered the tomb to be opened, evidently He was about to do something more. What could it be ? They expected Him to enter ; in anxious expectation Martha and Mary clung to each other, watching His every gesture and motion.

But He did not enter. He stood before the mouth as a priest would stand before an altar. He raised His eyes upwards ; He seemed to forget His surroundings ; He began to pray.

‘ And Jesus lifting up his eyes said
Father
I give thee thanks
That thou hast heard me

And I knew that thou hearest me always
But because of the people who stand about
Have I said it
That they may believe
That thou hast sent me.'

He looked into the darkness of the tomb. Raising His voice so that everyone there could hear Him He cried :

'Lazarus
Come forth.'

It was a terrifying moment. Scarcely a breath was breathed ; eyes were fixed, necks were strained, men and women were paralysed ; for there—how it had come there who could say ?—standing at the entrance of the cave, in all its bandages and cloths and wrappings, was the body of Lazarus. It was an apparition ; nay it was more frightening still ; it was a corpse walking.

'And presently he that had been dead came forth
Bound feet and hands with winding bands
And his face was bound about with a napkin.'

Jesus broke the spell. He looked at the white figure in front of Him ; then easily, as if nothing strange had been done, He turned about to those near Him and said :

'Loose him
And let him go' ;

and at once began to move away. When the time came Martha and Mary and Lazarus would find Him waiting for them in their home ; for the present, as usual, He would hide Himself from the honours of the crowd before they had awakened to the truth of what He had done.

'Young man
I say to thee
Arise' ;

and then in the most ordinary way He had given the boy to his mother and slipped away.

'Damsel
Arise' ;

and then He just asked that something might be given her to eat, and slipped away requesting that nothing should be said of what had been done. Such had been the other two raisings of the dead ; now,

' Lazarus
Come forth ' ;

and the story abruptly ends. Nevertheless it was the greatest miracle that Jesus had worked in His life ; for the others had been dead but a few hours, Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days.

So much had He done for His beloved, Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus. But He had done it for others as well.

' Destroy this temple
And in three days I will rebuild it.'

' As Jonas was in the whale three days
So shall the Son of Man be in the earth.'

' He shall be put to death
And on the third day shall rise again.'

The time was fast approaching for these prophecies to be fulfilled, for this last and greatest sign of all to be given ; on the recognition and acceptance of that sign all the faith of all future Christianity would depend.

' If Christ be not risen
Then is our faith vain.'

The Twelve were to be known, above all things else, as ' witnesses of the Resurrection '. Yet to this moment they had shown sad dulness on this point. In their hearing He had told His enemies that He would rise again, yet had the Twelve understood nothing. To them apart again and again He had spoken explicitly, yet they had only gone away, asking each other what He might mean. That He should fail and be crushed was hard enough to understand ; that He should die was worse ; but that after death He should rise again seemed but another instance of His playing with the words ' death ' and ' life ', in ways they could not hope to fathom.

To these He would speak, these He would prepare in this vivid way. As before, by the feeding of the five thousand in the desert, He had prepared them for the still greater wonder of the Bread of Life ; so now, by this raising of the dead from the tomb, He would prepare them for the still greater mystery of faith, when He Himself would rise again. And in the light of this wonder, after He was risen, they understood and knew and believed.

93. The Hiding in Ephraim

As we have often now seen, the people of Judæa were much more difficult to move than were the people of Galilee. When a man had been raised to life before their eyes they did not cry out, as the Galilæans had cried out :

‘ A great prophet hath risen up among us
And God hath visited his people.’

On the other hand, when He spoke of death as a sleep they did not behave as the Galilæans, who

‘ Laughed him to scorn.’

They were of a deeper nature than these ; slower to be convinced, inclined to question every step, seeing the significance and consequences of these wonders, when convinced taking very seriously their acceptance or their rejection. If they accepted and believed, they would do so with a whole heart ; if they refused and chose not to believe, they knew there was no further alternative but bitter hatred unto death. Outwardly there would be little manifestation.

These men of Jerusalem were, up to a point, self-controlled. They were drilled into good manners, they could show the greatest deference to others, they could affect to perfection the open mind, the spirit of enquiry, the sympathy with both sides which marked the man of culture. Secure in their position, their ancestry, their identification with the national ideal, they could even play with fire, with a religious manifestation they at heart both hated and feared, as if it were a passing toy, a bagatelle, a matter which did not concern them.

Moreover, in Judæa at this time, perhaps more than anywhere at any time before or since, there was that terrible hindrance to all truth, prejudice, or let us better call it, bigotry. For bigotry is nothing more than corrupted truth, than which real truth has no greater enemy. Bigotry breeds hatred, and hatred cannot, because it will not, see.

Upon a people trained in such a school the miracle at Bethania made different impressions. There were some akin to Martha and Mary, who believed already, who were astonished yet scarcely surprised, whose faith was deepened by what they had seen and rejoiced in this further proof of the Son of God. There were others, men chiefly from Jerusalem, who were well-disposed, but who because of the atmosphere in which they lived were still unable to make up their minds. They were friends of Martha and Mary and Lazarus; they respected both them and their belief in Jesus, and because of them were willing to show Him respect. These were present; these saw the miracle done before their eyes. Their goodwill enabled them to draw conclusions, their respect grew to awe, to reverence, to faith. He who did such a thing as this was worthy of belief.

'Many therefore of the Jews
Who had come to Martha and Mary
And had seen the things which Jesus did
Believed in him.'

But there were others still unconvinced; no matter what He did they would never be convinced. He had seemed to raise the dead; was it certain that Lazarus was dead? Or if He had raised the dead, was it clear by what power He had done it? Or if Lazarus was dead, was it certain that he was now alive? Or if he had been dead and was now alive, what did that signify? Had not the Pharisees, the men who ought to know, said that this kind of thing could be done by the power of Beelzebub? And if He could do this, could He not, much more wisely, and much less dramatically, have saved all the trouble and prevented Lazarus from dying? No; before the fact could be accepted at all, much less accepted as evidence, there were many problems yet to be considered. Science repudiated such things; science knew nothing of resurrections from the dead; theology itself could make nothing of it. Altogether a prudent man would at least suspend his judgement; he would report it to headquarters and have it discussed by those who ought to know.

'But some of them went to the Pharisees
And told them the things that Jesus had done.'

So quickly were illustrated the words of Jesus in the very last parable He had spoken:

‘ And he said to him
If they hear not Moses and the prophets
Neither will they believe
If one rise again from the dead.’

Nevertheless, let them assume whatever pose they liked, the fact before them was both disconcerting and anxious. They met together in the Temple, the chief priests and the Pharisees, as they had often met before, and again in solemn conclave discussed what action, if any, should or could be taken. To ignore and condescend was no longer possible ; finding fault had never been of much avail ; the attitude of sham respect had only exposed them to ignominy ; the pretence of enquiry was useless ; the plea of zeal for the cause of religion, of regard for the Sabbath and the ceremonies, had begun to be played out. Do what they would it could not be denied or overlooked that in Judæa of late, even as before in Galilee, the miracle-worker was capturing the people, and many were being seduced from their allegiance to Church and State. For the last five months, since He had come up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles in October, He had delayed about the place, and had made Himself a source of trouble. He had opened with the cure of the man born blind, which had moved the whole city. He had followed this up with His touching appeal, ending with the description of Himself as the Good Shepherd, just the kind of thing to catch the thoughtless people. Outside the city, on both sides of the Jordan, He had hung about instead of returning to His favourite haunts in Galilee ; the people of the neighbourhood had gathered round Him, as they had done on the same spot in the days of John the Baptist. Tales had come in of miracles He was working, and some of these in open defiance of the Sabbath. Worst of all, there were now to be heard from among the crowd cries of open declaration of belief in Him, and reverence for Him and His teaching ; isolated cries it was true, but much more full of meaning than the cries of the multitudes in Galilee. What was to be done ?

They looked at it from every angle. They could leave the Man alone or they could take further cognizance of Him. To do the latter was difficult ; it might even be dangerous. He had already openly defied them and they had found it impossible to retaliate ; whenever they had approached Him He had sent them away humbled, and had Himself gone free. Yet neither could they leave Him alone ; that would only encourage the foolish people to go after Him still more. Then there would indeed be trouble. There would be the usual Galilæan turmoil ; there would be another national faction, rising probably to open rebellion. The talk of the kingdom to come would be renewed, and would rouse the suspicion of the Romans. From these there would then be further restrictions, further curtailing of their own and of their nation's rights, which were already curtailed enough. In the end even the Romans, the long-suffering Romans, would grow tired of them, and with their well-known thoroughness would wipe them out once for all. No, something must be done ; what should it be ? They were in a terrible dilemma.

'The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees
Gathered a council and said
What do we ?
For this man doth many miracles
If we let him alone so
All will believe in him
And the Romans will come
And will take away our place
And nation.'

But there was one among them well able to extricate them. Now for the first time we hear of Caiphas, Caiphas the son-in-law of Annas, the Sadducee, the high priest of that year, and of many years before ; a man secure in his position by reason of his family alliances ; dominating and unyielding because of the school to which he belonged ; careless of the feelings of others in consequence of the long period of his office ; keen for the observance of the letter of the Law whence the spirit was long since departed ; honouring the God of Israel with lip-service while all faith was dead ; hating the thought of better things for the chosen people because it would shake his own position ; determined that order should be kept though it were the order of slavery and the gaol ; carrying all before him, brooking no opposition, bearing down every remonstrance by his own sheer will, skilled in specious language that would justify any step he might choose to take. We can see him, ‘ on his lofty throne of fire and smoke ’, for we see his like often about us ; the self-satisfied, overpowering, unscrupulous master, who has been the bane of the world since the beginning of mankind ; the man of cruel purpose, in whom was no love, only contempt, and merciless destruction of any that came in his way, while he posed as the saviour of humanity.

Caiphas presided at this council. He listened to the evidence and weighed the consequences. Whether or not it were true mattered to him nothing at all, what was more important was the presence of a power which threatened to oppose him. He watched the anxious faces around him ; he despised them for their timidity. He knew what in their hearts they wished to say ; he would himself find the formula which would satisfy their scruples. He let them exhaust their words ; the council could come to no conclusion. Then he rose, power in his attitude, emphasis in every syllable he uttered, as he said :

‘ You know nothing
Neither do you consider
That it is expedient for you
That one man should die for the people
And that the whole nation perish not.’

It was a happy solution ; the syllogism had been found ; they themselves had supplied the premisses. The death of one man was a less evil than the death of a whole nation ; of two evils the less must be chosen. The conclusion was obvious, nay, it was most righteous. They were not only justified in seeking this man’s death ; to do so, for the sake of Israel, was their bounden duty. Thus cleverly had Caiphas saved the situation.

The Evangelist, as he tells of this decision of the council, in his wonted way pauses to reflect upon it. In the drama of human life Caiphas was playing a part more prominent than he knew. He thought he was speaking for himself ; he forgot that he was speaking as the high priest of Judaism. He thought he was laying down a policy of expediency ; he did not know that he was the mouthpiece of the Old Law. He pronounced the sentence of death on Jesus to save the nation ; he little dreamt that already Jesus had passed that sentence on Himself. He looked only to himself, he hid himself under the interests of Israel ; the death he had decided on would be to the interests of the whole world. So S. John reflected; and his comment is one of the most pregnant sentences in the whole of his Gospel.

'And this he spoke not of himself
But being the high priest of that year
He prophesied that Jesus should die
For the nation
And not only for the nation
But to gather together in one
The children of God that were dispersed.'

The declaration had been made; justice was clearly shown to be on their side; it had been proved that Jesus ought to die. The councillors departed well content with themselves; all that now remained was to devise the best means to destroy their victim. It would not be easy. There were the people to be cajoled, many of whom had shown themselves inclined in His favour. There was their own reputation to be preserved, as the preservers of order and righteousness. Last of all there was Jesus Himself, who had foiled them so often before, and might well do so again. Still there was this in their favour; hitherto attempts upon His life had been only sudden, spontaneous, not quite whole-hearted; now His doom was fixed upon as a settled, united policy.

Whether some friend brought the news of this council to Jesus, or whether He knew it only from Himself alone, once more the action of the Pharisees was the occasion for a change on His own part. In the earliest days they had opposed Him, and He had left Judæa for Galilee; in Galilee they had opposed Him and He had gone out of their way into Tyre and Sidon. On various other occasions, in Capharnaum, in Decapolis, in Jerusalem, when rancour had threatened to be violent, He had yielded and gone elsewhere. So He did on this occasion. It was still a few weeks to the Pasch; till that appointed time He would not allow a hand to be laid upon Him. Meanwhile in Judæa there would be little hope of doing more with any peace. He would give way once again; but it would be for the last time. Away to the north and east of Jerusalem, almost on the border between Judæa and Samaria, nigh up on a mountain-side which slopes to the plains then called the desert, on account of its altitude visible from the Jordan main road, was the closely built little town of Ephraim. It was well away from the thoroughfare ; its position made it unfrequented by strangers ; one who chose to climb the hill and stay there would find it a quiet resting-place.

To this town Jesus now retired for a time. It would afford Him matter for much meditation. From it to the south He could look down to Jerusalem, and Olivet, and Jericho, and the Jordan crossing ; to the Dead Sea in the distance with Machærus on its high eastern bank. To the west stretched Samaria to the sea, to the east Perœa, hemmed in by the mountains of Galaad beyond ; northward He could follow the Jordan valley till it reached the Sea of Galilee. Every one of these vistas was now full of memories for Him ; as He looked down from the summit of the hill behind the town His whole active life could be seen spread out before His eyes. It was now the end ; His work was almost over ; here there would be little fear that He would be molested or interrupted. Before the last great tour He would go to 'this desert place apart' with His Twelve and 'rest awhile'.

'Wherefore Jesus walked no more openly
Among the Jews
And he went into a country near the desert
Unto a city that is called Ephrem
And there he abode with his disciples.'

CHAPTER XXXII

94. The Last Tour

AT length the day came when He must gird Himself for His last encounter; He must again go up to Jerusalem, this time to die and to conquer. He would do so in a noble way. Not only on the day of Palms soon to come would He display His Kingship; on the way to His capital He would make one grand triumphant march throughout His Kingdom. He would go and bid it all a last farewell. The country was now at its best; the rains were definitely over, and hills and dales were covered with a carpet of green, and flowers in abundance. Men and women were at work in the fields, for the crops were rising; the air was fresh, the summer heat was yet far distant, it was the ideal season for walking. Jesus rose from His seclusion on the mountain on which Ephraim hung high, and with His Twelve took the road that led westward into Samaria. Here He came upon the main highway which went north from Judæa into Galilee; the highway which He had often trod before. By this route He had come on His first memorable journey when He had made for Cana, where He turned the water into wine; by this again when He had met the woman at the well of Jacob, and had made her His first messenger of the word. By this route He had more than once returned from Galilee into Judæa; particularly we may mention that last time, when, on His way to the Feast of Tabernacles, His disciples had been ill received by the Samaritans on the border.

For a journey on foot from Ephraim up through Samaria, across Galilee, and back to the Jordan crossing by way of Decapolis and Peroea, even for a good pedestrian, and without any serious stoppages, the time required would have been more than a week. But the Evangelist suggests that there were many stopping-places; indeed the whole journey witnessed a revival everywhere of the old spirit, both in His own outpouring generosity and in the fond response of the peasant population. This is his brief description :

‘ And it came to pass
When Jesus had ended these words
Rising up from thence
As he was going to Jerusalem
He passed through the midst of Samaria
And Galilee
And he departed from Galilee
And came into the coasts of Judæa
Beyond Jordan
And great multitudes flocked to him again
And followed him
And as he was accustomed
He taught them again
And healed them there.’

It was a last good-bye, and in parting He would give them all He could ; He who at the Last Supper could be so extravagant in giving would not be different during this tour of farewell. We see Him resting once again on the masonry around the well of Jacob ; had He then spoken to a chance woman who came to draw water the Twelve would have been no longer surprised or scandalized. By this time they had learnt Him too intimately for that. From the well He would pass up the valley, and pay a last visit to the poor folks of Sychar ; the woman He had won would be there, and all would renew once more their act of faith :

‘ We now believe
Not for thy saying
For we ourselves have heard him
And know
That this is indeed the Saviour of the world.’

From Sychar He would pass by Sichem and Samaria into Galilee, crossing once more the valley of His delight when He lived in Nazareth, the Vale of Esdraelon. On His right He would leave Little Hermon, with the village of Naim nestling in the valley at its foot ; and the sight of it in the distance would bring back memories of that day when the people cried after Him :

‘ A great prophet hath risen up among us
And God hath visited his people.’

Across the valley, still on His right, rose the round hunch of Mount Thabor. That again brought recollections which could never be forgotten, of the day when the Father Himself proclaimed Him :

‘ This is my beloved Son
In whom I am well pleased.’

He ascended the range of mountains on the northern side. He came again into Cana of Galilee. Here He had worked His first and His second Galilæan miracle ; here dwelt Nathanael who had first said of Him :

‘ Thou art the Son of God
Thou art the King of Israel ’ ;

here, we can have no doubt,

‘ The multitudes flocked to him again
And followed him
And as he was accustomed
He taught them again
And healed them there.’

Thence once more He may have turned aside to His beloved and blessed but as yet ungrateful Nazareth. Or He may have gone straight on, across Galilee eastward to the Lake, to Corozain, and Capharnaum, and Bethsaida, and the Plain of Genesareth, and Magdala ; past Tiberias southward till He came to the Jordan and coasts of Gadara.

‘ And the multitudes flocked to him again
And followed him
And as he was accustomed
He taught them again
And healed them there.’

This time did He teach them only in parables ? Did He condemn them for their cold reception of Him ? The language of the Evangelist would seem to imply that, instead, the happy times were revived when

‘ Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and healing all manner of sickness and every infirmity among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria. And they presented to him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and such as were possessed by devils, and lunatics, and those that had the palsy, and he cured them. And much people followed him, from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and from Judæa, and from beyond the Jordan.'

It was the old times revived when

'Jesus went about all the cities and towns teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity. And seeing the multitudes he had compassion on them because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd. Then he saith to his disciples : The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send forth labourers into his harvest.'

In this last journey He would leave behind Him that fulfilment of the prophecy :

'Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul hath been well pleased. I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgement to the Gentiles. He shall not contend nor cry out, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets ; the bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not extinguish, till he send forth judgement unto victory ; and in his name the Gentiles shall hope.'

'He hath done all things well ; he hath made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.' So was the song of praise re-echoed as He went along, of 'Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in work and word before God and all the people.' 'Jesus of Nazareth—a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, as you also know.' 'Jesus of Nazareth, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.'

The nature of this last progress through the country of His predilection, with the witness of S. Matthew and S. Mark before us, who can doubt ?

95. The Ten Lepers

During the whole of this journey, which with its interruptions must have occupied several weeks, and which as we have just seen was marked with many discourses and miracles, S. Luke chooses only one scene for detailed mention. It took place outside a little town just within the boundary of Galilee, after one passes north by the high road out of Samaria. It was an isolated town ; no other was near to it for miles on any side; being on the main highway, and on the border between two provinces, it was a convenient halting-place for travellers; in fact this would seem to have been the chief reason for its existence. It stood to the right of the road as one went north, a few square mud dwellings rising one above another on sloping ground; on the left of the road was a little thicket through which a tiny brook wound lazily along.

Such a spot was just one of those places at which the outcast lepers of the country-side would most naturally congregate. It was far away from crowded towns, still not so far away but that news would easily come along down the main road. Here they might live their life of exile, yet there would be many a traveller who would stretch out to them a helping hand. Hard by was the wood, giving shelter from the blazing sun, the brook to slake their thirst or to wash their stricken limbs; along its banks, when they chose, they could hide themselves and shelter. Nor would it matter much whence they came; Gentile or Jew, Samaritan or Galilæan, when touched with leprosy became easily akin; lepers are beyond such prejudices.

Into this town, on the third or fourth day of His journey, Jesus was entering with His Twelve as the sun was beginning to set; He had at last reached Galilee and the Twelve were glad. As He came up the road He was easily recognized; it was the Wonder-worker come back again, it was the Man who ‘went about doing good’. The lepers knew all the stories concerning Him; for a long time they had hoped He might come their way; if He only would, how much might not be expected from Him!

So thought ten poor lepers who for many a long day had hung about outside the town. Common misfortune had drawn them together, to whatever side of the border they had originally belonged. They shared their sorrows and they shared their consolations; outcast by the rest of men they were all-in-all to one another. At a distance from the crowd that gathered on the road these men saw Jesus coming forward. It was He at last; what might they not expect? They would wait till He came by them and would ask Him. But what was this? They had hoped He would come on; instead He turned aside to go into the town. They must lose no time; they must bring themselves to His notice; yet with the crowd all about Him, and themselves condemned to stand apart, how could they hope to get near? Still must they not lose hope. On their crutches and maimed limbs they hobbled as near as they dared; encouraging each other they eagerly raised their voices; at last, when they were near enough to be heard, together with one accord they cried:

'Jesus, Master
Have mercy on us.'

'And as he entered into a certain town
There met him ten men that were lepers
Who stood afar off
And lifted up their voice saying
Jesus, Master
Have mercy on us.'

At the sound of their voices Jesus stood still. He looked across in their direction. He did not go towards them; He was almost unmoved; He saw them where they stood appealing and it was enough. Raising His voice He called to them:

'Go
Shew yourselves to the priests',

and then watched them turn away.

For indeed they lost no time in going. They had heard the word; they had seen in His face that well-known look of assurance and command which compelled men of goodwill to obey. Though they were not healed they knew that in doing His bidding they would be rewarded. Round the edge of the little town they hurried along to where the synagogue stood, with the houses of the priests near by. And behold as they went the change came. Their limbs became whole and supple; it was easy to walk, nay, to run; they threw away their crutches and sticks, and bounded along into the presence of the men whose business it was to testify to their cure. This was soon done; the signs of leprosy were only too well known, and nothing of the kind was now to be discovered on any of these men. By whatever means it had been done, undoubtedly they were cured, and each in turn received his certificate of clean health.

They were happy men that evening; in their joy they ran into the village to celebrate their good fortune with friends ; not for the first time in the life of Jesus was the Man who had done this for them forgotten. There was one exception. Among the ten was a Samaritan, who had joined the lepers of the place from across the border, and who therefore even among the lepers was looked upon as the least of the least. Him too the priests had certified ; though he were only a Samaritan they must do him this justice. But after that, unlike the others, there were no friends for him in the Galilæan town with whom he could go and rejoice. Nor after all did he need them. As he stood outside the dwelling of the priests, and realized what had been done to him, his thoughts went back to the Man who had said the word which had meant so much, and his heart was grateful ; it was almost sad with gratitude. Without more ado he hurried back ; he could now return more quickly than he came ; whatever it cost he must find that Man again and thank Him for what had been done. Even as he went along he could not contain himself ; the place resounded with his cries of thanksgiving.

‘ And one of them
When he saw that he was made clean
Went back
With a loud voice glorifying God
And this was a Samaritan.’

Jesus, it seems, had not left the spot where the lepers had accosted Him. Perhaps, as usual, He had sent two of His followers into the village to find accommodation for them all before He entered ; perhaps, too, He was waiting for the issue of the miracle He had worked. He had the people round Him ; there was much that He could do for them ; He ‘ spoke to them the word ’ and waited. Then into the midst of the throng, regardless of all about him, shouting his joy as he came, rushed headlong the poor Samaritan. The crowd made way for him, curious, excited, yet shrinking a little. The man cared nothing for them all, in a moment he was down at the feet of the Master, pouring out his gratitude in words he did not reckon.

‘ And he fell on his face before his feet
Giving thanks.’

Jesus let the good man have his way. Gratitude had not been too common an experience in His life, and He would allow Himself this consolation. Still it was a consolation with bitterness attached. He had healed ten ; one only had thought of thanking Him ; and that one was not of the house of Israel. He could not but feel it, and He would say so ; perhaps what He said would bear fruit.

'And Jesus answering said
Were not ten made clean ?
And where are the nine ?
There is no one found to return
And give glory to God
But this
Stranger.'

Still the man must have a yet greater reward ; in generosity Jesus will never be outdone. He had been healed ; his cure should be confirmed ; he should be placed alongside of others, pagans and sinners, whose faith in Him had transcended the faith of the people whom He called His own.

'And he said to him
Arise
Go thy way
For thy faith hath made thee whole.'

In the light of these words we ask ourselves anxiously what became of the other nine.

96. The Coming of the Kingdom

In this way, peacefully, almost triumphantly, the progress was made through Galilee and back by Peroea to the Jordan ford. We have few details ; yet such as they are they all point to the same conclusion. They explain and lead up to the glorious procession of Palm Sunday which was to follow in but a few days. Even the enemy was more quiet. We have seen on several occasions how the Pharisees in the provinces, when left to themselves, were much more amenable to the influence of Jesus than were their brethren in Jerusalem ; it was usually when these latter came amongst them that there was bickering and trouble. Thus somewhere on the road during this tour they again accost Him. He has spoken of the kingdom at hand for now more than two years ; yet hitherto there has been no sign of its establishment, at least according to their notions of the founding of a kingdom. Even His own followers were of the same mind ; not till after He was gone from them would they understand.

> ‘And being asked by the Pharisees
> When the kingdom of God should come
> He answered them and said
> The kingdom of God cometh not with observation
> Neither shall they say
> Behold here or behold there
> For lo, the kingdom of God is within you.’

The Kingdom of God has been prominent from the beginning, but here was something far more explicit than anything that had hitherto been said. Once and for all it was an emphatic repudiation of that external kingdom of which so many at the time were dreaming ; the kingdom was one that would not be seen, it would be located nowhere, it would be, and was, in the hearts of men and there alone. It might lead to other things, to union of hearts, making all of one mind, and therefore bringing all under one head. From this there would grow a semblance of external kingdom, but essentially the kingdom would be within, and the external would sway, not strictly men but the hearts of men, not numbers but a spirit. It would act as leaven, it would grow as a tree, and the birds would live among its leaves ; it would be a new life, and later we shall learn that that life was even His own. Thus when S. Paul comes we find him transferring the metaphor from the Kingdom to the life ; he catches the thought of S. John and furthers it, until the Kingdom becomes no more nor less than the mystical body of Christ, and membership in the Kingdom is identical with membership of His body.

Not perhaps till the end will it be possible to analyse the mind either of the Pharisees or of the Twelve on this one point. There were extremes of thought ; for while some looked for a new kingdom in its crudest and most material sense, undoubtedly there were others, and many others, who knew that something quite different was meant. If the Old Testament had made much use of the imagery of the earthly kingdom, nevertheless it had also emphasized the fact that it was a kingdom of interior regeneration ; that truth of life was the condition of membership, that a false life, no matter what might be a man’s external status, was rejection. Moreover, though it spoke much of the kingdom of Israel, still the idea it conveyed was eminently universal. Isaias and Daniel, prophets of the kingdom above all things else, cannot leave aside the hope of the Gentiles ; and this, in the opening scenes of the New Testament, is the first idea that is emphasized, by the angel to Zachary, by the angel to Mary, by Mary at the Visitation, by Zachary at the birth of John, by the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem, by Simeon and Anna at the Presentation, by the Magi. Later when the Public Life begins, we have the same introduction ; in the preaching of John the Baptist :

'Do penance
For the kingdom of heaven is at hand' ;

in the conversion of Nicodemus, in the meeting with the Woman of Samaria, in the opening of Jesus' own mission :

'The time is accomplished
And the kingdom of God is at hand
Repent
And believe the gospel.'

Lastly, sufficiently at least for our present purpose, throughout the teaching of Jesus two things may we notice. When men were true to Him, and expressed belief in Him, and were disposed to frame life according to that belief and truth, then He would say :

'Thou art not far
From the kingdom of God' ;

and this to both Jew and Gentile. On the other hand, when they were untrue, or tended to be untrue, or substituted the external for the internal, or were even in danger of being so influenced, then He would grow severe, and express his disappointment, and hold up a hand of warning with the words :

'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees
Which is hypocrisy' ;

and this even to His own chosen Twelve, on whom the Kingdom was to be founded. They might therefore still have delusions about the external kingdom, they might still, for such is and always will be human nature, be inclined to judge of the interior spirit by the exterior glamour that appeared, but that He at least made more, on the one hand of poverty of spirit, on the other of persecution for the sake of justice, and under all of faith in Him, there could be no doubt. Whatever the exterior ambition, the interior purification was a first essential. This we must remember when on occasions yet to come we find the Twelve still hankering after crowns and sceptres and thrones.

It would seem that on the occasion of this enquiry of the Pharisees Jesus seized the opportunity to drive the lesson home to His Twelve. When the former were gone, or it may be that in some formal way He turned aside from them to address the Twelve and their followers, Jesus

'Said to his disciples: The days will come when you shall desire to see one day of the Son of Man, and you shall not see it. And they will say to you: See here, and see there; go ye not after nor follow them. For as the lightning that lighteneth from under heaven shineth unto the parts that are under heaven, so shall the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must suffer many things, and be rejected by this generation. And as it came to pass in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat and drink, they married and were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it came to pass in the days of Lot: they did eat and drink, they bought and sold, they planted and built, and in the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man shall be revealed. In that hour he that shall be on the housetop and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away; and he that shall be in the field, in like manner let him not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose it shall preserve it. I say to you, In that night there shall be two in one bed: the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together: the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. Two men shall be in the field: the one shall be taken and the other shall be left.'

Vivid as this was, it was nevertheless mysterious language, not even by us, perhaps, wholly to be understood. The 'day of the Son of Man'—what could it mean? They would desire to see that day,—what could He mean? They will say: 'See here and see there'—to that we have a comment later in S. Matthew:

'Then if any man shall say to you
Lo here is Christ
Or there
Do not believe him
For there shall arise false Christs
And false prophets
And shall shew great signs and wonders
So as to deceive
If possible
Even the elect
Behold I have told it to you beforehand
If therefore they shall say to you
Behold he is in the desert
Go ye not out
Behold he is in the closets
Believe it not
For as the lightning cometh out of the east
And appeareth even unto the west
So shall the coming of the Son of Man be
Wheresoever the body shall be
There shall the eagles also be gathered together.'

Yet in the midst of this He had again warned them of trouble. He would be the truth; others would come to deceive them and usurp His place; nevertheless He would come to His own only through suffering and rejection. Very different, therefore, would His conquest be from the conquest of an earthly monarch; hence they might conclude how different would be the kingdom He would conquer.

'But first he must suffer many things
And be rejected by this generation.'

He had said it already several times; He would say it again, yet would they never understand until in all its bitter reality, a week or two hence, the full tragedy would be enacted.

To the succeeding passage again S. Matthew has a parallel, more explicit, perhaps making the meaning more clear. He thus gives the words of Jesus:

'As in the days of Noe
So also shall the coming of the Son of Man be
For as in the days before the flood
They were eating and drinking

Marrying and giving in marriage
Even till that day
In which Noe entered into the ark
And they knew not till the flood came
And took them all away
So also shall the coming of the Son of man be
Then two shall be in the field
One shall be taken
And one shall be left
Two women shall be grinding at the mill
One shall be taken
And one shall be left
Watch ye therefore
Because you know not at what hour your Lord will come.'

97. Two Parables on Prayer

From all this, from the reproduction of the same ideas elsewhere in SS. Matthew and Mark, it would seem again that S. Luke is adding as it were an appendix to his narrative. He would not omit these wonderful yet almost weird passages ; he has no other place in which more conveniently to set them. Obviously their teaching belongs to the last phases of the public life ; therefore they may well be placed here. That they were not understood he shows in his own dramatic way ; the blundering Apostles asked where should be taken the man from the field.

No less significant is the way S. Luke introduces his next paragraph. It is a lesson on prayer, which the Evangelist of prayer can on no account omit.

'And he spoke also a parable to them
That we ought always to pray
And not to faint.'

It is the subject that concerns him ; the occasion he seems to have forgotten.

'Saying
There was a judge in a certain city
Who feared not God
Nor regarded man
And there was a certain widow in that city
And she came to him saying
Avenge me of my adversary
And he would not for a long time

But afterwards he said within himself
Although I fear not God
Nor regard men
Yet because this woman is troublesome to me
I will avenge her
Lest continually coming
She weary me
And the Lord said
Hear what the unjust judge saith
And will not God revenge his elect
Who cry to him day and night?
And will he have patience in their regard?
I say to you
That he will quickly revenge them
But yet the Son of man when he cometh
Shall he find, think you
Faith on the earth?'

In such passages as this last we hear the hungry heart of Jesus crying out. In the matter of faith in Himself He is never satisfied. The Twelve with all their belief were:

'O ye of little faith.'

To others He gave the offer that if they would only believe they should have power to move mountains; to all there is repeated the simple question:

'Do you believe?'

This lesson on prayer leads S. Luke to recall and record yet another; having taught the need of perseverance in prayer, he now tells how Jesus taught the spirit of it.

'And to some who trusted in themselves as just
And despised others
He spoke also this parable
Two men went up into the temple to pray
The one a Pharisee
And the other a publican
The Pharisee standing
Prayed thus within himself
O God
I give thee thanks
That I am not as the rest of men

Extortioners, unjust adulterers
As also is this publican
I fast twice in the week
I give tithes of all that I possess
And the publican
Standing afar off
Would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven
But struck his breast saying
O God
Be merciful to me a sinner
I say to you
This man went down into his house justified
Rather than the other
Because everyone that exalteth himself
Shall be humbled
And he that humbleth himself
Shall be exalted.'

Jesus 'knew what was in man'. He knew man's tendency to justify himself; the whole force of the outlook which He opened to mankind lay in this uprooting of self-justification that man might put his trust in something more secure. It is the difference between the Christian and the pagan standard. Having nothing to rely upon higher than himself, the pagan must needs make of himself the most he can, convince himself that he is good, that he is perfect, that he is reliable; and to do this he must dwell upon those external signs which should be tokens of that which is internal. And he must do more; in lifting up himself there must inevitably follow comparisons with others; while he sees his own virtues he must see the shortcomings of the men around him. There must be gulfs fixed between him and his fellows, there must be castes; caste with its implacable rivalries and hatreds and contempts and oppositions unto death must inevitably rise, as it has always risen, out of the pagan ideal.

Thus it was in the Jewish world about Him; the pagan atmosphere had crept around the chosen people and had done its work. Self-righteousness had come in as the standard of morals. If in the eyes of other men a man could justify himself it was enough; for then, on that same ground, he could justify himself in his own eyes as well. The rest could be ignored; there was no other standard, no other judge to be considered; Jesus from beginning to end fought to destroy this paganism, feared for His own nothing more than that it should creep in among them.

'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees
Which is hypocrisy.'
'Woe to you scribes and Pharisees
Hypocrites.'

On the other hand, if only He had truth and sincerity, there was scarcely anything that He would not endure and condone.

'Extortioners
Unjust
Adulterers
Who did not fast
Who gave no tithes';

the list might be lengthened indefinitely; yet all might be cleared by a single word if only it came from the heart:

'O God
Be merciful to me
A sinner.'

To be guiltless and to take pride in it was a greater evil than to be a sinner, if only one owned it from the heart to God; yet what else had paganism to offer than the first? What else has it to offer to-day? And that both outside and inside the Kingdom of God, outside and inside the soul of every man. Since the days of Cain the contest had gone on. Nowhere more than in the prophets does the warning resound, notably in Isaias.

98. Jesus and the Children

Often enough already we have been compelled to draw attention to the universality of the appeal of Jesus, a universality which has no parallel in the life of any man that has lived. He is a friend alike of rich and poor, of learned and unlearned, of ancient sage and rash youth, of kings and shepherds, of priests and common working men, of old men and old women, of selfless saints and self-seeking sinners, of those who sought Him and of those who stood aloof, of those who made merry and of those who hid themselves away, of Pharisees and publicans, of noble rulers and of stricken beggars, of old companions and of new-comers, of prosperous leaders and of oppressed widows, of Galilæans and Samaritans, of Jews and Gentiles, of the forward and the bashful, of innocent and guilty, of the sanguine and the despondent, of the successful and those who failed, of the active and those given to contemplation, of the grateful and the ungrateful, of the considerate and the thoughtless,—whichever way we turn we find always and for ever the same understanding of all, the same attraction, the same welcome, the same readiness to respond, the same conviction conveyed that there is none with whom He is not in complete sympathy, and with whom any man at all cannot gain complete familiarity if he will.

Nowhere is this universality more conspicuous than in the touching scene which, however insignificant in itself, has nevertheless been thought worth while recording by the three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, each in language of his own. They have followed Jesus through His last journey; they have set Him before us in unusual dignity and strength. He has spoken in more forcible language than ever before of the coming of the Son of Man, of the need of prayer, of the obligations of family life. He has been set before us as one who commands, surrounded by a sense of awe which, since the day He left Bethania after the raising of Lazarus, nothing has relieved. Now, on a sudden, with that emphatic contrast so common in the story of His life we are told:

'Then they brought to him also little children
That he might touch them
Impose hands upon them
And pray.'

Evidently, then, no matter what impression of sternness has been left upon us by the tone of the last discourses, to those who listened to Him there was felt nothing of the kind. He might warn them of one woman being taken and another being left, but He also told them of the widow whose prayers won justice from a judge who was unjust. He might speak severely on the laws of marriage, yet in the end what He said made the woman more secure. While He spoke the mothers were won by Him, the firmness of His tone inspired in their children only trust. Pharisees might stand aloof, but women and infants crept the closer to Him. He might raise His hand as if to strike, but they would confidently ask Him to touch them. He might threaten, but they would seek His blessing all the more. He might speak severely about the need of prayer, all the more would they beg Him to pray over them.

For indeed these women knew that in His hands their children were secure. His universal sympathy included even them ; with children, indeed with all the world if it would but see it, He was just a little child.

' A child is born to us
And a son is given to us
And the government is upon his shoulder
And his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor
God the Mighty
The Father of the world to come
The Prince of Peace.'
Isaias ix, 6.

' The wolf shall dwell with the lamb
And the leopard shall lie down with the kid
The calf and the lion and the sheep shall abide together
And a little child shall lead them.'
Isaias xi, 6.

Not without reason had the prophet emphasized this special character of the Messias ; nor in His earliest days had Jesus without reason emphasized its fulfilment. He had lived as other children ; more than other children had He suffered. Born in destitution, flying for His life, with the thought never-to-be-forgotten that His own birth had brought death to many infants and misery to many mothers, brought up in secrecy lest He might be too soon discovered ; such a childhood, even if nothing else were there, must have fostered a sympathy for children beyond the common.

And already how often He had shown it! He had raised to life a boy to soothe his widow mother, a girl to comfort a distracted father ; when He fed the five thousand, and again the four thousand, the children were included in that prophetic miracle. His great Gentile miracle had been the driving of a devil out of a little girl ; after the Transfiguration He had done the same for a little boy ; on other occasions the children were abundantly favoured. Or who that was present could forget that day when He taught the Twelve the value He set upon a child?

‘And taking a child
He set him in the midst of them
Whom when he had embraced
He saith to them
Whosoever shall receive one such child as this
In my name
Receiveth me
And whosoever shall receive me
Receiveth not me
But him that sent me.’

And again:

‘Amen I say to you
Unless you be converted
And become as little children
You shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven
Whosoever therefore shall humble himself
As this little child
He is the greater in the kingdom of heaven
But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones
That believe in me
It were better for him
That a millstone should be hanged about his neck
And that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea.’

By all this and more might the Twelve have known the child that lived in the heart of their Master. But they might have known it by countless other signs; by the simple love He always showed His Mother, by the quick response He made to any mark of affection, by the way a little slight hurt Him, by the trust He placed in others, even those who would one day turn against Him, by His spontaneous generosity, by His easy contentment, by His delight in the birds of the air, and the flowers of the field, and the children at play in the market-place, by the eye that watched the labourers in the field, and the housewife in her cottage, and the shepherd with his sheep in the upland, by the ease with which He painted fairy pictures of royal banquets, and kings going out to battle, and told tales of sheep gone astray, and naughty brothers,—fascinating tales such as only a man with the mind of a child could tell. They might have known Him in His strength and His weakness; the child setting his teeth to be brave and do his duty, the child looking for companionship and comfort, expanding with joy when a friend showed he cared.

But for the moment the Twelve were unconscious of all this; children themselves, they had been blinded by the passing glamour. The Master had of late been the Master indeed. He had just been defining the limits of the Law, defiant of Pharisees, contradicting even Moses. Surely this was no time nor place for meddlesome mothers with their babies. They turned on the intruders; they fussed about among them. They would have them be off and take their charges with them; though it does not appear that their zeal for the comfort of the Master was of much avail.

'Which when the disciples saw
They rebuked them that brought them',

says the Gospel; with what effect it does not say.

Jesus was engaged with elders, with followers much troubled about what He had been saying, when the women pushed their little children to His knees. We can see Him looking up to the former, speaking to them His last words, His mind turned on them while His hands were held out to be seized and played with by the happy children clambering about Him. We can see the Twelve keeping order, some close by, trying to stem the tide of infants flowing in, some at the door, or in the street outside, remonstrating with the inconsiderate women who would so pester Jesus at a moment when He was engaged with matters more important. Presently He has finished what He has to say. His eyes turn down to the little ones that want Him; from them He looks out on the bustle at the door, where His zealous Twelve ward off the women who would trouble Him. A shade passes over His face; He shows displeasure. He stops their zeal with a word, He attracts their attention. Keeping still about Him the children who have scrambled through, He beckons to the Twelve to come near. He speaks to them severely, yet were ever more gentle words uttered? The paradox, the impossible combination of extremes, baffles us at every turn; Jesus Christ, the strongest and the mightiest, the meekest and the least of men.

'Whom when he saw
He was much displeased
And calling them together said to them

Amen I say to you
Suffer the little children to come unto me
And forbid them not
For of such is the kingdom of God
The kingdom of heaven is for such
Amen I say to you
Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God
As a little child
Shall not enter into it.'

The opposition was quelled ; the Twelve stood there in silence, their lesson learnt once for all. The women, single-minded, delighted to have their will, crowded about Him all the more. The children came nearer, they knew in whom they could trust ; they had found Him whom their little souls loved, they held Him and would not let Him go. Big Jesus talking to big men was also little Jesus playing with them, and they lost themselves in the joy of it. And as they crushed upon Him He put His arms about them. He held them to His heart, as many as He could reach, in a fond embrace. He gave them that joy for which many a saint has craved, but which when given has been more than human nature could endure. The children grew silent in His arms, the mothers were beside themselves with satisfaction, the Twelve looked on, and another trait in the character of Jesus was stamped upon them for all time. For a moment or two it lasted ; then He released His hold. While the little children, as it were, awakened from their ecstasy, He put His hand on the head of each, gently, one by one. He delighted in them, His eyes turned up to heaven, He blessed them. He rose from His seat, He smiled upon them, He prepared to move forward on His road, and instinctively the happy little group dispersed.

'And embracing them
And laying his hands upon them
He blessed them
And departed from thence.'

CHAPTER XXXIII

99. The Rich Young Man

SCARCELY had Jesus come out into the open street than another meeting occurred which three Evangelists have thought it worth their while to record. The story of the mothers and the children is proof sufficient that, whatever the nature of the belief of these people of Perœa, Jesus had won His way to the hearts of many. Somehow on the east of Jordan, from Decapolis to the crossing before Jericho, He met with more affection and regard than He found elsewhere. Though their race was more mixed, though they were of less consideration than the more orthodox folk of Judæa and Galilee, still did they never wish to cast Him out, they never laughed Him to scorn, they did not turn aside and walk no more with Him. On the contrary, whenever He came, both for Him and for the seventy-two whom He sent before Him there was always a glad welcome. Miracles He might bestow on them or not; it was Himself more than His miracles that had won them.

Thus on this day, when the women and children have been made glad, and Jesus begins to move forward, a group gathers round Him of those whose hearts have been already won. There is an atmosphere of favour all about; in such surroundings it is easy to be with Him. As He comes down the road there meets Him one, a young man, of the wealthiest class, himself a large owner of land, on this account a man of much consideration and a ruler in his rural district. He was a good youth enough, as is easy to see, with high ideals, who realized his status, and the power his wealth gave him, and meant to be worthy of both; a youth with ambitions, who would make of himself the best that could be made, would do great things, would prove himself deserving of the honour of his people. He had so far lived a true life, a straight life worthy of 'a gentleman', and meant to live no other to the end. He was no prodigal son, he already had the respect of others, he was well on the way to be a popular hero in that country-side.

As Jesus came along, with the approving crowd around Him, the heart of the young man was stirred. Jesus was a good man, Jesus was inspiring, Jesus professed to teach, and actually taught, what made men grander and more noble. Even for such as he, this young man thought within himself, He might have some seasonable word to give. Jesus spoke much of the Kingdom of heaven, of eternal life ; in that He seemed to place the goal of perfect being. Therefore, thought this young man, if he would win a word of counsel from Him, he too must make eternal life his goal. The people round Jesus were enthusiastic for Him ; they would approve nothing more than deference shown to Him ; therefore, thought this young man, to pay Him public reverence would only add to his own reputation. His mind was soon made up ; when Jesus came by he would do the right thing. He would pay Him respect ; he would treat Him as a wise man in the country, he would place himself at the head of those who would show Him honour. No doubt in return he would receive some favour, if only some word of wisdom, and his place in the esteem of his neighbours would be higher than ever it had been before.

When, then, the throng came near where he stood, he made as if he would join it. For one of his position room was quickly made ; soon he was in the very centre. At once, sincerely enough, and yet with motives more mixed than he knew, he began to play his part. He went down on one knee before Jesus in the road ; he looked up into His face with eyes that meant to be loyal ; on his brow was stamped loyalty and truth and frankness and a love of all that was straight and noble. His dress was all that it should be ; his voice was mellow and attractive ; carefully from head to foot as he knelt he was exactly that which he wished to think he was, and which he wished other men to think him.

‘ And when he was gone forth into the way
Behold a certain ruler running up
And kneeling before him
Asked him
Good master
What good should I do
That I may possess everlasting life ? ’

Jesus looked at the good-natured, straight, well-groomed youth who knelt before Him. He looked at him, He was pleased; yet He was not enthusiastic. He accepted this mark of allegiance; yet He seemed also to take it as nothing strange or new. Could He know who this was who was showing Him such consideration? If He did, surely He would realize how much it meant for Himself. Yet no; He accepted the honour but no more; the young man was only doing what might have been expected of him, and as for what he said, Jesus seemed inclined to underrate it. 'Good Master!' Evidently the youth had not weighed his words. This was a compliment, no more; and mere compliments meant nothing.

'And Jesus said to him
Why callest thou me good?
None is good but one
God
But if thou wilt enter into life
Thou knowest the commandments
Keep the commandments.'

Certainly this was not the kind of reception the young man had expected. 'Keep the commandments!' That was commonplace enough, surely anyone of ordinary self-respect observed them. But perhaps He meant something else. Perhaps there were other commandments of which he had not heard reserved for those who aspired to the kingdom. John the Baptist had enjoined prayer and fasting; every teacher of higher things had done the same. No doubt those who followed Jesus had like instructions, and if he showed himself willing to follow he would learn them as well. So

'He said to him
Which?'

But the answer was no less disconcerting. Jesus was still unmoved; He seemed almost not to care; at least one might conclude from His manner that He looked on the young man kneeling before Him as of little importance for His cause.

'And Jesus said
Thou shalt do no murder
Thou shalt not commit adultery
Thou shalt not steal

Thou shalt not bear false witness
Do no fraud
Honour thy father and thy mother
And
Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

And was this all? If so, then what was the difference between the teaching of Jesus and that of any other honest man? In what did He excel? If this was all, then why was so much being made of Him? Why were His friends so enthusiastic, why did His enemies so hate Him, why did He Himself make so much ado to declare He had come to teach a new doctrine? If this was all, why then he had nothing more to learn. Up to his lights he had lived a life of which he had no cause to be ashamed. Murder, adultery, theft, false witness, fraud,—the idea of a man of his station ever committing anything of the kind! As for his father and mother, why of course he showed them honour; every self-respecting and educated Jew did that. And as for his neighbour, he could call the crowd about him to witness that he had no quarrel with anyone; he was always generous to all. He could only remonstrate; he could only speak the truth; perhaps if he did he would learn more.

'But the young man answering said to him
Master
All these things have I kept
From my youth
What is yet wanting to me?'

Now at last, though the youth himself did not know it, the truth of his soul began to peer out. Hitherto, almost unconsciously, so much was it part of his life, what he had said and done had been little more than pose. He had come to Jesus because it was the thing to do, he had bent the knee to Him because by so doing he won approval; he had asked for the key to everlasting life, because he wished to attain it, because he believed that in that he would attain his highest ambition. But now he was disturbed. Jesus seemed not to make much of him; the ideal he set before him was no better than might suit any common yokel. He began to feel humbled, he grew more earnest, he must really show Jesus that he meant what he said. Even as he spoke, in no Pharisaic mood but in anxious self-defence, the mannerism dropped away and the heart of the pleader rang true.

And at once Jesus responded. The youth was upright; that He had known from the beginning. The possibilities in him were untold; that He also foresaw. The mannerism was no more than a little worldliness, a vanity such as is not only common, but is assumed by many as virtue. The youth had meant no wrong; he had only done what anyone of high ambition would have done in his place. Now a new motive had been stirred, and he said what he had just said, not to win the esteem of men but to win the regard of Jesus, whose love he now began to desire. To that could Jesus turn a deaf ear?

'Which when Jesus had heard
Looking on him
He loved him.'

His eyes turned down to him. There was fire in them now; there was eager love glowing over the whole face; love let loose all its power of appeal and attraction. It would give this youth a great chance. He asked to be allowed to give, and Jesus would ask for that which would make him a hero. And to help him to make his choice aright He would pour out upon him the whole ocean of His love.

'Which when Jesus had heard
Looking on him
He loved him
And said to him
Yet one thing is wanting to thee
If thou wilt be perfect
Go
Sell all whatsoever thou hast
And give to the poor
And thou shalt have treasure in heaven
And come
Follow me.'

Again we have to notice here that habit of Jesus to go beyond every appeal that is made to Him and to give more, to respond to every act of faith and recognition by an increase of both. In no act of generosity will He ever be outdone. The youth had begun with convention, as a youth of his position might; he had used the polite 'Good master', he ended by appealing as to a 'Master' in truth. He had at first but asked for the means to attain 'everlasting life', and was told it. He was not satisfied, he asked for more, the grace of Jesus drew him on till he began to yearn for perfection. And in like proportion did the attraction of Jesus grow; first to observance of the Law, then to observance of the counsels; first to common righteousness, then to the perfect man; first to the attaining of the Kingdom, then to the piling up of treasures without it; first to a life of ordinary duty, then to a life of union and companionship with Him.

'Go, sell all
Give to the poor
Come follow me;
Jesus looking on him
Loved him;'

in that summary was contained the whole meaning of religious life.

The sequel was sad. As the words were uttered disappointment began to show itself in the young man's face. He had great possessions; with all this wealth he had hoped he might be of service to Jesus; he was asked to get rid of it all, and to waste it all upon the poor. He was a man in authority; he had hoped that by his influence he might sway public opinion in favour of Jesus; he was asked to put all his authority away and to join a group of Galilæan labourers. Surely Jesus had mistaken; surely this was not common sense; it was not reason; no one who aspired to found a kingdom would so throw away the advantages he had to offer. So nature appealed; so it justified refusal; and yet on the other side was something which said that he had been only taken at his word. He had asked to be shown how to do a noble thing and it had been shown to him. He had aspired to the most perfect ideal that he could attain and it had been set before him. To be made free, with the freedom with which Christ would make him free, to follow the grail which was the Light of light Himself, to be rich in that which his own soul had long taught him was more excellent,—no, it was not common sense, but it was heroic. It was not according to the nature that clung close around him, but it was according to that better soul which struggled within. He was torn between the two; the joy with which he had sprung into the presence of Jesus faded into nothing. Nature said it was too much; nature said he could not, he should not. It was wrong so to wreck his life, his happiness, his power for good. He rose to his feet, he drooped his head, he turned away distracted, sad:

'And when the young man had heard this word
Being struck sorrowful at the saying
He went away sad
For he had great possessions.'

Jesus let him go; to what he went who shall say? Maybe for him, in the eyes of the world of men, all went well enough. Maybe he played his part as well as he had played it hitherto, honestly, dutifully, respected by all who knew him, keeping all the rules required by his status; yet would he never forget those eyes that looked on him and loved him, that voice which spoke to him and asked him to be a friend, that soul which cleaved to him and promised him, not only everlasting life, but over and above everlasting treasure, pressed down and flowing over. And the joy for a moment would fade from his cheek, and the heart would shiver, and he would need to shake himself and turn aside to his 'many possessions' to convince himself that he was a happy man.

Jesus let him go. As he turned about and lost himself in the crowd and walked with Him no more, the eyes of Jesus followed him. They followed him and haunted him for ever. As sadness covered his face, the face of Jesus also grew pitiful and sad. The sheep had refused its shepherd. He let him go; when he had gone Jesus looked about on the people round Him. Finally, His gaze resting on the Twelve, He commented on what they had just witnessed.

'And Jesus seeing him become sad
Looking round about
Saith to his disciples
Amen I say to you
How hardly
Shall they that have riches
Enter into the kingdom of God.'

The words astonished the poor literal-minded Twelve. Was this a new condemnation, a new exclusion from the kingdom? Was it then an evil to be rich? They had seen this young man before them; they had admired him, they had hoped when he spoke that he might be made one of their number, even as Levi the publican had been made one of them on a memorable day two years ago. They could not speak; they did not dare to ask what He meant. Once more, as so often, they trusted that the future would make all clear.

But Jesus saw their perplexity and relieved them. He had but to explain one word; still, when that was done, in the hyperbolic manner of the time, he would drive home no less mercilessly the lesson He had to teach.

'And the disciples were astonished at his words
But Jesus again answering saith to them
Children
How hard it is
For them that trust in riches
To enter into the kingdom of God
And again I say to you
It is easier
For a camel to pass through the eye of a needle
Than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'

The teaching had been interpreted, but the emphasis had been repeated. If such were the difficulty, what man could hope? It was all more perplexing than ever.

'And when they heard this
The disciples wondered very much the more
Saying: Who then can be saved?'

The passage needs but little comment; the answer of Jesus is enough.

'And Jesus looking on them saith
With men it is impossible
But not with God
For all things are possible with God.'

It is almost humorous to notice the effect of this lesson on the busy and anxious Twelve. In their own tiny villages some of them had been persons of no small consequence. Simon and Andrew, James and John, had owned their own fishing stakes, their vessels and their nets; they had had their hired men under them, they had done business with Magdala, perhaps even with Jerusalem. Nathanael in

Cana, whatever his trade, had been a power in his municipality. Then there was Matthew, who at least had had money under his fingers. And for the rest, from Philip to Judas, they had all once had hopes and opportunities, and even yet were not without their ambitions.

As Simon heard the words of Jesus, he looked about him and summed the matter up. Was this threat meant for them? Surely not. They had a purse among them, but it was for common use, and was safe in the hands of his friend Judas. And it could not contain much. Only this year, when rashly he had committed Jesus to the payment of the Temple tax, Jesus, to extricate him from his difficulty, had been compelled to work a miracle. In their wanderings with Him they had endured poverty enough; He had restricted them as to clothing and baggage, for food He had made them depend on the kindliness of strangers, much of their sustenance had been provided by the women who followed and looked after them. No; they could not be accused of being rich. Whatever they had once possessed, or had hoped to possess, they had given it all up; and though great and rich men might smile at the amount of their surrender, nevertheless it was their all. To a poor man a penny is more precious than a thousand pounds to a millionaire.

Thus far, then, whatever might be the real meaning of this teaching concerning riches, they could not be to blame. And if not to blame, then perhaps they might take credit to themselves. Two years ago, when He had personally and definitely called them, they had left their all, father and mother, and ships and comrades, and had followed Him. Since then they had been faithful; their presence with Him here in Peroea, away from their homes and native villages, was evidence enough of that. Then what was this He said?

'Thou shalt have treasure in heaven'?

What, therefore, might not they expect? Spontaneous Simon Peter, accustomed to utter the thought that was uppermost in his mind, could keep it back no longer.

'Then Peter answering began to say to him
Behold we have left all things
And have followed thee
What therefore shall we have?'

In the days to come, when this story was told of Simon Peter, or when he read it in the pages of the written Gospel, we can imagine the feelings that must have possessed him. 'What therefore shall we have?' What had he not received already? He who from the first had been chosen as a companion of Jesus; whose heart had found a friend second to none; who had witnessed His miracles from the first and had listened to His every word; for whom more than once special miracles had been worked,—the healing of his mother-in-law, the draught of fishes, the walking on the waters, the tribute payment, if no others; for whom many a special instruction had been given that he might know what others could not understand; who had himself been given the gift of miracles; who had been empowered to go and teach the word; from whose boat, for a sign, Jesus Himself had taught, who had always been given the first place, whose word in the end had been taken as the declaration of faith for all mankind; who had been made Peter, the Rock, the foundation of the Church, promised security for ever; who had been given a glimpse of heaven itself in the vision on Thabor; Simon Peter, who in return for his fishing-tackle and his stake had been given all this, could yet ignore it all and look up and ask:

'Behold we have left all things
And have followed thee
What therefore shall we have?'

And yet it may be that Simon knew his Master well, and could interpret Him better than we think. He who had so often, so vehemently taught that men should ask and ask:

'Ask and you shall receive
Seek and you shall find
Knock and it shall be opened to you';

He who had promised the largesse of the Father:

'Full measure
Pressed down
And flowing over';

He whose hand was never tired of giving, who complained only that it was not permitted to give more; He who was all this, and did all this, did He not almost provoke such a question? This at all events is clear; Jesus was to Simon Peter such that the question he put seemed to him who put it no arrogance, no extravagant impertinence.

And in royal way was it answered. This time there is no

'Go behind me, Satan
For thou savourest not the things of heaven
But the things of earth';

there is no

'Thou of little faith
Why didst thou doubt?'

Instead there is an outpouring which is worthy of the King of heaven and earth, whose desire is to give and give till He has given all. He looks not at the faults, nor at the shortcomings; not at the lack of faith and trust; not at the failures in the past or yet to come. They have mentioned one thing they have done; on that one thing He will concentrate. He will shut His eyes to all the rest; that one thing they have done for Him shall be rewarded in overflowing measure.

'And Jesus answering said to them
Amen I say to you
That you who have followed me
In the regeneration
When the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of his majesty
You also shall sit on twelve seats
Judging the twelve tribes of Israel
And Amen I say to you
There is no man
Who hath left house or brethren or sisters
Or father or mother or children
Or lands
For my name's sake and for the gospel
Who shall not receive an hundred times as much
Now in this present time
Houses and brothers and sisters
And mothers and children and lands
With persecutions
And in the world to come life everlasting
But many that are first shall be last
And the last shall be first.'

It is the expression of a heart that could find no words by which to express its gratitude. Even that unlooked-for addition,

'With persecutions',

is thrown in as a gift which He has already taught them to value, and which later they will learn to treasure above all else that He has to give. Had it been excluded from this list of favours, there would have been a strange omission.

Suddenly here, without further introduction, the Evangelist gives a parable whose lesson bears upon, one may say follows from, what has been said, though it is not precisely the same. God will reward in abundance those who come to Him, but the measure and order of His reward shall be His own. He will give man his deserts, and more than his deserts; but if He gives to one more than to another no man shall have cause for complaint. He is the Just One, He is the Lavish One; let that be enough.

'The kingdom of heaven is like to an householder who went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And having agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing in the market-place idle; and he said to them: Go ye also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just. And they went their way. And he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour and did in like manner. But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing, and he saith to them: Why stand you here all the day idle? They say to him: Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them: Go ye also into my vineyard. And when evening was come the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward: Call the labourers and give them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first. When therefore they were come that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more; and they received every man a penny. And receiving it, they murmured against the master of the house, saying: These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the heats. But he answering said to one of them: Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine and go thy way. I will also give to this last even as to thee. Or is it not lawful for me to do what I will? is thy eye evil because I am good? So shall the last be first and the first last; for many are called but few chosen.'

One must resist the temptation to digress and dwell upon the conditions of labour and employment in the time of Jesus, and the conditions as they are understood to-day. We see the master of a vineyard, when, as at this time of the year, the weeding had to be done and the thick fruit thinned out, going in the morning to the nearest town and walking through the bazaar. Here labourers have gathered from distant villages, looking for employment. They know hands will be wanted in various fields and on various plantations, and they will easily be engaged. There is a standard wage which all well know, and so long as the employer will agree to it they are willing to do his work. So they are employed and labour by the day; when they have earned enough they yield to others and retire to their own little patches at home.

Then there are further labourers. Three hours later the employer returns to the village, when the cool of the morning is over and the best working hours are gone. He finds other men seeking work. At this hour they cannot expect a full day's pay; they must work for what they can get. He comes again at midday, again in the afternoon, and the men accept the same terms. He comes at evening, when only one hour remains, and finds yet others unemployed. These he blames, but they have a good defence; they are idle because they have failed to secure employment, and he is satisfied that they are honest. Finally there comes the hour of payment. No matter what the labour done, each man receives the same. It is the principle of the minimum living wage.

Jesus has seen all this in His native Nazareth; who knows but some day He Himself may have been among the workmen so employed? Here in Peræa He passes through a market town and sees the same scene enacted. At evening, as the men come home counting their earnings, according to His wont He catches the event and gives it this new significance. Truly is He one with those around Him.

100. Third Prophecy of the Passion

The circular tour which had begun at Ephraim was coming to a close. Jesus had led His Twelve down from Galilee through Perœa; so long as He remained on that side of the Jordan there was little to cause alarm. There the Pharisees and their allies were not much in evidence; there the people, with their limited spiritual horizon, were nevertheless favourable, in their way even devoted, to the Man who went about among them doing good. The memory of John the Baptist was still fresh among them, his death in the fortress of Machærus, visible from all down the valley, had been bitterly resented. Though they could not show their feeling towards his cruel murderer, still they could pay respect to One who apparently had taken John's place. In this country, too, the followers of Jesus had been well received, better it would seem than anywhere else. Let Him remain therefore in Perœa and all would be well; at the worst, from Perœa, if opposition came, it would be easy to escape. There was Galilee close by, there was the country beyond, to say nothing of the Galilæan pilgrims who passed up and down the main road.

But it soon became evident that He did not intend to stay in Perœa. Steadily He made His way down towards the Jordan crossing. He did not turn aside; every day He Himself took the lead; there was less delaying now than when they last came that way together, when He went to Bethsaida to raise Lazarus from the dead. Even then they had been anxious; they had remembered His reception in Jerusalem; but now things were very much worse. It was well known that at last the authorities had definitely decided on His death; let Him again come into their precincts and they would spare nothing to accomplish His doom. Even Jesus Himself had shown that He recognized the danger. After the miracle at Bethsaida He had hidden Himself away; even the raising of a man from the dead had not been able to convince His enemies. The Twelve watched where He was leading them and they were surprised; they followed, but they feared what might happen.

'And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem
And Jesus went before them
And they were astonished
And following were afraid.'

Meanwhile for Jesus Himself the end, He knew, was drawing near. In a few weeks more all His work would be done ; He would have failed completely, and in His failure would triumph. On former occasions He had looked back, and had felt keenly the recompense He had received for all He had said and done and given ; a little praise, a little enthusiasm, once or twice only a word of thanks, a blind confession from a chosen few, blind but sufficient to allow Him to build upon it, here and there, in the most unlooked-for places, an acknowledgement from individual souls that had gone right to His heart, but from the rest very little indeed that in the least showed they had discovered Him. That was all. It was a sad harvest that He was reaping ; seed sown on rocky soil, seed sown on shallow ground and among thorns ; even the seed sown on good ground checked in its growth by the cockle sown amidst it. And now that the harvest time had come the labourers to gather it were all too few.

But at the present moment there was little time for reflexion on the past. His eyes were set more upon the future, and the immediate future was to be full of many things. The hour was at hand ; now He must make His last attack upon Jerusalem. The hour was at hand, and the prophecies must be fulfilled ; prophecies which His chosen people, be they friends or enemies, refused to understand, and which He must interpret to them in terrible deed. There was the prophecy of His betrayal :

'For even the man of my peace
In whom I trusted
Who ate my bread
Hath greatly supplanted me' ;
Psalm xl, 10.

and the picture loomed up, not so much of the misled people who would howl Him to His death, but of their leaders, the priests and the learned and the elders, who even now were planning His destruction. He looked to all that would follow ; these, His own, would condemn Him to death ; unable themselves to execute Him, they would hand Him over to others who could. There would follow the great ignominy, the mockery, the spitting, the scourging —in comparison with these His sensitive nature set all the rest aside. They would scourge Him ; unjustly they would scourge Him; they would scourge Him after He had been declared not guilty; they would scourge Him because He was found innocent. This unexpected torture, this public shame, the Gentiles would add to the programme appointed by the Jews; we see the mind of Jesus dwelling on this, repeating it, as if it were to hold a special place in what He was about to suffer.

They would scourge Him, and then He would be put to death. But after that would be the Resurrection. To this thought He clung; in it He had courage; in it, too, He would give courage to His own. For He must again prepare them for what was to come. He had warned them before, not once but many times, and they had failed utterly to understand Him. They had asked themselves what He meant, they had given His words all manner of interpretations; but that literally their Master should perish, that after all His victories He should at last be made a prisoner, that the Omniscient should be betrayed, that the King that was to be should die, was all too impossible. As for the dead lifting Himself out of the tomb, there could be no meaning in that but pure allegory. They still thought this, and yet the time was drawing near. Again He would prepare them for the blow; more explicitly than ever He would teach them. Though in the end they would be scandalized in Him, for the prophecies so foretold, still the scandal should not come from any want of warning from Himself.

Hence when they had now crossed the Jordan, and were making their way up the road towards Jericho, more than ever He gave His attention to the Twelve. On that spot, two years and a half ago, the first of them had discovered Him. They had heard Him called 'Lamb of God' by the messenger of God Himself; yet they had always failed to see the significance of the title. He called them aside from the road; maybe He wandered with them down the very path along which they had first gone after Him. At least it was very near the spot; with encouragement He spoke, though what He had to say could inspire in those who heard it only fear.

'And taking again the twelve unto him apart
He began to tell them
The things that should befall him

Saying to them
Behold we go up to Jerusalem
And all things shall be accomplished
Which were spoken by the prophets
Concerning the Son of Man
For he shall be betrayed
To the chief priests and to the scribes and ancients
And they shall condemn him to death
And shall deliver him to the Gentiles
And they shall mock him
And spit on him
And scourge him
And after they have scourged him
They will put him to death
And the third day he shall rise again.'

Surely this was language explicit enough. But no ; let Him be as explicit as He might, they could not believe it was true.

'And they understood none of these things
And this word was hid from them
And they understood not the things that were said.'

Only later, when all was over, did they comprehend, not only that what He said was true, but also that from the beginning He had foreknown and permitted that it should be so. He had laid down His life when He would, and when He would had taken it up again.

101. The Ambition of the Sons of Zebedee

Early in the life of Jesus we have heard of certain women who followed Him in His ministry through Galilee, serving Him and those who were with Him in their need. Now on the road up to Jerusalem we meet with one, not mentioned then but to be mentioned more than once later ; and from the fact that she is then found in their companionship we may conclude that even to this late hour the attendant women had been faithful. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, had at the call of the Master left their father on the side of the lake at Bethsaida ; but it would appear that their mother had not left them. Though in the list of those women who first went with Jesus her name does not appear, still from this time, on Calvary and after the Resurrection, Salome is found in their company, as evidently a faithful follower.

'And there were also women looking on afar off
Among whom was Mary Magdalen
And Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joseph
And Salome
Who also when he was in Galilee followed him
And ministered to him
And many other women that came up with him to Jerusalem.'

So says S. Mark; and S. Matthew helps us to identify Salome:

'And there were many women afar off
Who had followed Jesus from Galilee
Ministering unto him
Among whom was Mary Magdalen
And Mary the mother of James and Joseph
And the mother of the sons of Zebedee.'

These same we find together making the first visit to the tomb on the Resurrection morning:

'And when the sabbath was past
Mary Magdalen
And Mary the mother of James
And Salome
Brought sweet spices
That coming they might anoint Jesus.'

We are not then surprised, at this time and amid these anxious surroundings, to find devoted and enthusiastic women still following the Lord, thinking little of the signs which were making men afraid, devoted only to Him, and for what might come of it willing to take all consequences. Their woman's instinct saw where man's reason only blundered. He was true gold and they knew it and it was enough. He had spoken; what He had said they could hardly tell, but He had spoken with authority and had carried them away in admiration. They could trust Him, they could say to Him with ease what they would; they would do anything for Him, and in return would not be afraid to ask anything from Him.

So pondered Salome, the mother of James and John, those 'sons of thunder', who were so downright, so zealous for their Master's honour, so faithful, so moved by love, so ambitious that they might play a great part in the founding of the Kingdom. She had seen them set apart even from the rest of the Twelve, and made His intimates alongside of Peter. Peter, James, and John were now recognized as leaders of the rest. They were faithful sons, and she was proud of them. They were capable of much, and she was ambitious for them. Jesus, James, and John,—James and John and Jesus,—if their names could be linked up together for ever, if those two loves of hers could so be blended into one, she would care for nothing else, she would die a happy woman.

Often when the three had been together the mother and the sons had talked the matter over. They had expressed their ambitions to her, and she had encouraged them to the last degree. They had talked in a vague way of what they would be and do, and she had defined their wishes for them. He was to be a King, and to found a Kingdom, then they must be His chief lieutenants. The Twelve were to sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; then they must aspire to the highest places. It was true that on one occasion, when they had disputed among themselves who should be greatest in the Kingdom, and John in particular had spoken more vehemently than the rest, Jesus had rebuked them. He had put a little child before them, and had told them that he who would be the greatest must begin by being the least. But that was easily understood. Her sons were willing to be the least; they were willing to be as children; she could answer for it what good sons they had always been. Never had mother such sons; taking Jesus' own standard, never had mother a right to hope for more for her children than Salome had to hope for hers.

So the talk had gone on between them, and the ambitions of the three had soared high. But then Jesus had also said: 'Ask, and you shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened to you'; and He had again and again shown how readily He responded to anyone who asked of Him anything. Then why should they not ask of Him now? Why need they hold back? The household of Zebedee had no reason to be bashful. In Bethsaida it held its head high; if the

Twelve were to be princes they might expect that they should be given a high place. All this time the mother had been faithful in their service, and in zeal the sons had gone beyond the others. Who then could object if they put before Jesus their petition, one might almost say their claim, to special distinction, to a special place in the Kingdom that was to come?

So they argued among themselves, mother and sons, sons and mother, encouraging each other to be bold. Yes, they would go and ask Him; but they must consider Him whom they asked. Never yet had Jesus been known either to refuse a woman's prayer, or to say a hard word to a woman; men, on the other hand, and especially His own, He had often enough rebuked. For James and John to go alone might be dangerous. He had more than once warned them against their over-zeal. He might only answer their request by warning them again. But with their mother they would be safe. She must go to Him, and they would follow in her wake; she must try to win Him, and they would take their cue from her; she must ask, and they would urge the petition, loyal alike to her and to Him.

Thus it came about that one day, on the road up to Jericho, when Jesus was resting with His followers about Him,

'Then came the mother of the sons of Zebedee
With her sons James and John
Adoring
And asking something of him.'

She was very much in earnest, this vigorous mother of these very vigorous sons, this mother of the 'sons of thunder'. She came into His presence fully alive to the magnitude of her request. She would make a great ceremony of it; formally she would adore; like Esther before Assuerus she would urge her suit before the King.

But the sons were equally zealous, and, as often enough before, they could not restrain their words. Their mother had spoken for them; Jesus, with His wonted gentleness with women, had

'Said to her
What wilt thou?'

before she could formulate her request James and John must have their say. They too now pressed forward, they knelt and adored by their mother's side ; they would let Him see that they endorsed what she said, that she spoke with their approval.

' And James and John come to him saying
Master
We desire that whatsoever we shall ask
Thou wouldst do it for us.'

And He received them as He had received their mother. He was not angry with them ; with all their faults, indeed in some sense because of their faults, He had a special love for James and John. One of them was known as ' the disciple whom He loved ', and it may well have been that the consciousness of this had encouraged the mother to be bold. Jesus was familiar with them ; He looked at both the sons and the mother. While doing so

' He said to them
What would you
That I should do for you ? '

The encouragement was enough to set the mother's tongue free. Proudly she looked at her grown-up children ; hopefully she looked into His face. There was no faltering in her voice as

' She saith to him
Say that these my two sons may sit
The one on thy right hand
The other on thy left
In thy kingdom.'

Again James and John could not restrain themselves. Yes ; what their mother had said was just what they ambitioned ;

' And they said
Grant to us
That we may sit
One on thy right hand
And the other on thy left hand
In thy glory.'

Jesus did not blame them for any false ambition. He knew how to interpret what they said ; not really for themselves did they say it, but because of their loyalty to Him. But He had great things to teach them, and He would seize this opportunity. Not long ago, when He had first

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spoken of His coming Passion, Simon had shown his loyalty by exclaiming that such a thing should never be, and Jesus had been compelled to silence him. Later, when they had gone up to Bethania, Thomas had shown himself more brave by suggesting that they should all go and die with Him. Now there should be another step. That they might sit at either side in His Kingdom? That was in the gift of His Father. But this much He could give; He could give them the means by which, so far as men were able, they might earn it. He had told them lately again, but this time more plainly than ever, that He Himself must suffer, and die, and then rise again; this was the fulfilment of His early teaching:

'Blessed are they that suffer persecution
For justice' sake
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

He spoke to them with warning, yet with no shadow of condemnation in His tone; with sternness, yet with encouragement; what He said in no way damped their ardour.

'And Jesus answering said to them
You know not what you ask
Can you drink of the chalice
That I shall drink of
Or be baptized with the baptism
Wherewith I am baptized?'

James and John were not afraid. When is a novice afraid at first hearing of the Cross, having as yet known little of it? When is any youth of spirit afraid when he first dreams of doughty deeds to be done, though he must pass through fire to do them? 'Drink of the chalice'? 'Be baptized with His baptism'? Why of course they would. Had they not long since left all and followed Him? Had they not clung to Him in success and failure, in the midst of enthusiastic Galilæans and when heckled by disdainful Pharisees? Had they not promised already to be with Him even to death? Had they not shown their readiness to fight for Him, for instance that time when they had silenced the man who had preached in the name of Jesus but without His authority; and that other time when in Samaria a city had refused to receive Him? Could they drink the chalice? Was that the price? There was only one possible answer.

'But they said to him
We can.'

Jesus heard. Again He did not rebuke them; this time He did not even warn them. He would give them what He could, but, though at the moment He would not say it, He would give it in His own sweet way. Above all to John. He should share in the chalice in a way none of the others would share, but he would also share in what Jesus could give of His best. He should be one of the three who would be called to be with Him in the Garden, but he should also be the one privileged to lean on His breast at the Supper. He should stand, alone of them all, at the foot of the Cross, but he should also be given special charge of Mary. He should be a martyr and yet outlive them all, dragging on life to a weary ninety years, but all men should know him as the witness of the Son of God, with a vision of God standing alone in its grandeur. What on this earth Jesus could give He would give; the gift in the Kingdom should be known hereafter.

'And Jesus saith to them
You shall indeed drink of the chalice
That I drink of
And with the baptism wherewith I am to be baptized
You shall be baptized
But to sit on my right hand
Or on my left
Is not mine to give you
But to them for whom it is prepared
By my Father.'

It was not to be expected that such a scene as this should be passed over by the rest of the Twelve in silence. That Simon Peter should be first was quite well understood; apart from his personality he had been specially allowed to be their spokesman, and Jesus had sanctioned their choice by appointing him the Rock. But for the rest, the question was still open. Along the road they had often discussed the matter among themselves; once when Jesus had chanced to overhear them they had been rebuked. He had concluded by telling them that he who would be the greatest must become the least. Why would not James and John learn their lesson? Being always inclined to be forward, why would they so push themselves? It was an offence to Him, perhaps also to themselves it was no less offensive.

'And the ten hearing it
Began to be much displeased at the two brethren
James and John.'

They 'began to be much displeased'; by unmistakeable signs and words they began to show their displeasure. They showed it within the sight and presence of Jesus; what does this not reveal in the character of Jesus Himself? At this eleventh hour He still is only Jesus, the Beloved, the feared, the Master, the familiar, the Lord too great to suffer, the friend too near to be as much as remembered.

Jesus let them talk to one another for a time. Then He called them to Him. He had spoken to them more than once on this same subject, He would speak to them again; in the end there would be no lesson they would take more to heart. But at present He needed to repeat it; soon by deed He would drive the teaching home and then they would understand.

'But Jesus calling them to him saith to them
You know
That the princes who seem to rule over the Gentiles
Lord it over them
And the great exercise power over them
But it shall not be so among you
And whosoever will be great among you
Let him be your minister
And whosoever will be first among you
Let him be the servant of all
Even as the Son of Man
Is not come to be ministered unto
But to minister
And to give his life
A redemption for many.'

CHAPTER XXXIV

102. The Blind Men at Jericho

THE road from the Jordan led in a direct line across the rising plain to Jericho. The town lay at the foot of the hills of Judæa. On the right, as they went along, the mountains of Ephraim began to rise, reaching on past Jericho into Samaria. Among those mountains, close behind the city, Jesus had fasted forty days at the outset of His career. The hills in front shut out Jerusalem from them ; at Jericho the road swerved to the left, seeking the most even course among the valleys, till it reached Bethania at the eastern side of Olivet. There it forked ; one route, to the right, went over the mountain and dropped into the valley of Kedron beyond, the other swerved round the base of Olivet, meeting the first again before it turned into the north-eastern gate of Jerusalem.

Along this well-beaten track, more trodden by Jesus than any other that we know, He was now making His way for the last time. It was indeed a road of many memories. Up that route the Hebrews had come when they first entered the Promised Land ; the fall of the Jericho that then was had been the beginning of the conquest under Josue. Round about this spot the name of Eliseus still lingered. The well whose waters he had made sweet still supplied the people of the city ; it is there to this day, with an orange grove beside it. He came up the road, entered the busy town, and passed through it ; we have no record that Jesus ever stayed in Jericho, as we have no record that He ever stayed in Tiberias. Tiberias was Roman, given up to all that was most characteristic of Roman life ; Jericho was stamped with the luxury of Herod the Great. To have preached in either of these places would have been the sheerest waste of time.

He came up from the Jordan during the morning, and as He came many that knew Him followed after. In Jericho He rested at midday, and through the early afternoon ; as the sun began to slope over Jerusalem and the hills of Judæa, He set out again in the direction of Bethania and the Holy City. There were many with Him; the gatherings in this part of Judæa had long since rivalled those of the early days in Galilee. There were many friends from the country round about; friends who had listened to the Baptist and had been won by him, friends who, especially in these last months, had heard Jesus Himself and had seen the things He had done. There were also many who would call themselves neither friends nor enemies; for Jericho was a city of luxury and pleasure, famous for its fruits and flowers and merry-making, and Jesus was a new excitement in their midst. And there were enemies; it may be not many at this point, but the spies and emissaries of those in Jerusalem were never far away, and they had long since learnt to keep Him always in sight.

Up the lane as they came out of the city was the usual spectacle. There were travellers coming down from Jerusalem—it was just a day's journey on foot—with their asses and perhaps a camel making their way into Jericho for the night. There were loiterers along the road, whose day's work was done, and who were taking their rest in the evening sun. By the roadside were beggars, among them two blind men, one of whom was well known to the people of Jericho. His name was Bartimæus, which is to say the son of Timæus. He had begged at that spot many an afternoon, and knew how to interpret the sounds of the travellers that went by him to and fro.

But to-day there was evidently something unusual. The crowd came along out of the city; there was much talk and enthusiasm. Still it was not the noise of a marriage procession, which Bartimæus knew well, nor of a funeral, for there was no lamentation, nor yet was it the tumultuous rout of a Herod and his retinue, making its way to Jerusalem for the coming festival. It might indeed be a gathering of pilgrims, from Galilee, or Percœa, or elsewhere, for several had passed by of late. Still, even so, there was something about the tumult of this crowd that sounded different from others. Bartimæus was curious; as the stream of enthusiasts passed by him where he sat he pulled one by the coat; he asked him what all this enthusiasm meant.

Everybody knew Bartimæus; he had no fear of being passed over by the common populace. They answered his question, more than one at once—

'They told him
That Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.'

Jesus of Nazareth! So that was the name by which He was still known among the people; His presence, His teaching, His miracles had not yet succeeded in making men speak of Him as anything but this—Jesus of Nazareth!

But to Bartimæus it was different. He had long sat by the roadside, and had had ample time to ponder many things. The stories concerning Jesus of Nazareth had been much discussed in his neighbourhood; nowhere more than here had He found both friends and enemies. Reports of the wonders He had wrought in Galilee had come down the road; but even here in Judæa, though the miracles had been fewer, yet had they been more striking and momentous. Not least had been the healing of the man born blind, outside the Temple of Jerusalem, at the Feast of Tabernacles a few months ago. That had set all Judæa talking; many on its account had espoused His cause, declaring Him to be the Messiah. Since that day He had been more than usual in that district, and had confirmed the impression by what He had said and done. Two other blind men He had healed; He had released a demoniac deaf and dumb; in a synagogue He had made a bent old woman stand up straight; last of all, up the road at Bethania, He had actually raised a dead man from the tomb.

Bartimæus had pondered upon all he had heard, and had long since made up his mind. Jesus of Nazareth was no ordinary man; John the Baptist had said so beforehand, and all he had heard since confirmed it. Should ever Jesus pass that way again, two things he would do; he would confess his belief in Him, and he would ask Him to restore him his sight.

And now he had his opportunity. The crowd was moving on, taking little notice of Bartimæus and his companion; unless they did something Jesus would pass by in the middle of the throng and would not so much as see them. He must act at once; he must attract attention. He believed, better than many in that noisy crowd believed, and he would not go unnoticed.

'Who when he heard
That it was Jesus of Nazareth
Began to cry out and to say

Jesus
O Lord
Thou Son of David
Have mercy on us.'

It is to be noticed that in these parts this was evidently something new. The people were enthusiastic, but their actions showed that they were not used to miracles. What had been common and even expected in Galilee, what was not surprising in Samaria, and Decapolis, and Perœa, here in Judæa was an unusual and unlooked-for event. The crowd was satisfied with its own enthusiasm, it resented interference or interruption such as that of Bartimæus. Jesus was on His way up to the Holy City and must not be interrupted by beggars such as he.

'And the multitudes that went before
Rebuked them
That they should hold their peace.'

But Bartimæus was not to be silenced. He had begun in faith and confidence; in the same confidence and faith, let men say what they liked, he would continue. Nay, he would continue more vehemently than ever, and his companion shouted with him.

'But he cried out a great deal the more saying
O Lord
Thou Son of David
Have mercy on us.'

The procession still passed on; perhaps in the tumult the voice of these beggars would not reach the ears of Jesus. But it was not so. He had come up the lane opposite to where the beggars sat, and there He stood still. His stopping for a moment silenced the noise about Him; through the silence the cry of the blind men could be heard more distinctly than ever. He did not move towards them; He stood in the middle of the crowd; He turned in the direction of the spot from which the cries came, and bade the blind men to be brought to Him. At once there was a change in the attitude of the crowd; was He about to work another wonder? There was a rush to the two blind men; if before they had blamed them, now the fickle people could only speak words of encouragement. What

Jesus had done before He might do again, and then they would indeed be happy men.

‘ And Jesus standing still
Commanded them to be called
And they call the blind man
Saying to him
Be of better comfort
Arise
He calleth thee.’

Bartimæus and his companion needed no second invitation. They lay there on their sacking by the roadside ; another piece of cloth covered them, partly from the sun, chiefly from the dust of the lane that rose in a cloud with every passer-by. At once they discarded their sackcloth. They leapt to their feet ; they stretched out their arms, groping in their darkness that they might find their way to Him who was their hope. Eagerly the crowd led them to Him. Men stood aside for them, closed in upon them from behind ; in a very few moments they were in His presence in the middle of the lane, and perhaps did not know it.

Jesus stood and looked at them. Always had He been particularly tender with the blind. His curing of the blind had been the first claim among His miracles ; the curing of the blind was particularly symbolic of Him who was the Light of the World. These men besides had proved their faith. They had shown that they believed He could heal them ; more than that, they had called Him ‘ Son of David ’. Here on the road up from Jordan, where John the Herald had announced the coming of the King, these blind men had declared their recognition of His royalty. The people still might call Him just ‘ Jesus of Nazareth ’ ; these blind men hailed Him ‘ Jesus Son of David ’, not yet so much as ‘ the Christ ; the Son of the Living God,’ nevertheless for the light that was given to them a good and heroic confession.

Such faith could never go unrewarded. Still there was one consolation which, of late especially, Jesus did not disdain. He loved to be asked a favour ; He would sometimes try His petitioners, just that they might be provoked to ask Him the more. The men had been brought to a standstill in front of Him ; not knowing where they stood they waited for a sign. And He gave it. He looked into the face of Bartimæus, of him who had been loudest in his appeal, and said to him :

‘ What wilt thou
That I do to thee ? ’

The voice drew their faces to Him ; before, they had not known which way to turn, now they understood. With their blind eyes they looked towards Him ; they were eager as they had never been before in all their lives ; the people about held their breath in no less eager expectation. Bartimæus had been addressed ; Bartimæus answered.

‘ Lord, Rabboni ’, he said
‘ That our eyes be opened
That we may see.’

The face of Jesus changed. It softened as we have seen it soften many times before. These blind men believed and it was enough ; they asked something of Him and they should receive it. He had compassion on them ; we have heard this of Him in other places ; for the moment He seemed to forget all else, His own anxieties, the curious crowd about Him, so preoccupied was He with the plight of those two blind men. He bent down towards them as they crouched before Him ; His fingers touched their closed and sunken eyelids ; to each He said, with satisfaction in His voice, as if He were glad to do this thing :

‘ Go thy way
Receive thy sight
Thy faith hath made thee whole.’

The effect was instantaneous. He took His hands from their faces ; as He did so their eyes opened and they saw. They saw Him, they saw the crowd about them , the joy of recovering the power they had long since lost overwhelmed them. Jesus moved away ; the people thronged about the two men ; the wonder that had been worked for the moment distracted them from Him who had worked it. But not for long ; though others might forget Him Bartimæus was not one who could. As before he had ignored the crowd so did he now. He saw, he would not leave Him who had given him sight ; if men came in between him and his Benefactor he would break through their midst and be with Him. He would follow the Son of David, and as before, his companion would go with him.

'And immediately they saw
And followed him in the way
Glorifying God.'

The crowd could not but join with them. Though miracles in Judæa had been few, nevertheless the people had long since known that Jesus had the power; though among them He seemed to confine Himself to individual cases, yet He could pour out His healing in abundance if He would. Among the common people of Judæa there was greater faith and understanding than there had ever been among the people of Galilee, and the future would prove that they would bear the greater fruit.

'And all the people
When they saw it
Gave praise to God.'

103. Zacchæus

As Jesus had passed out of Jericho along the main high road it was clear He was making for Jerusalem. The city was a day's journey further on foot, and it was already evening; it was certain He would stop somewhere on the road for the night. Perhaps He would choose the khan midway between Jericho and Bethania. Perhaps some friend who lived by the roadside would take Him in; for along the way were many homes of the wealthy of Jericho and of Bethania, lying back in their well-wooded and well-irrigated gardens. Jericho at this time, thanks in part to Herod the Great, was a rich place, with fruits and flowers such as no other spot in Judæa could boast and abounding in trees of many kinds.

In one of these houses outside the city lived one Zacchæus; a rich man, whose wealth enabled him to have his home in this quarter, even if his profession prevented him from entering the society of his neighbours. For he was the chief publican; he rented out the gathering of taxes for the Roman Government to those who cared to compete for them. His trade was odious to a self-respecting Jew; as the go-between, working for the Romans, he was doubly odious. In spite of his wealth, so doubtfully acquired, he knew he had nothing but contempt from those who lived around him, and he had learnt long since to be content with his lot.

Nevertheless, since the days of John the Baptist, new ideals and new hopes had opened out for even the publicans in Judæa. John had welcomed such as these no less than others; to them he had opened the door of the Kingdom, telling them merely that they must demand no more than the tax that was due. Since that day many a report had come down the road from Galilee of the favour Jesus had shown to men of His class. It was said that one of His special group was a publican, it was known that He had not disdained to dine openly with publicans; on more than one occasion He had openly said that His Kingdom would have a place for them, when others more respectable would be cast out. Even in the neighbourhood here He had twice at least of late spoken out for him and his associates. Once when the haughty Pharisees had affected to be shocked at the company He kept He had defended them, and had shown by stories of His own invention that He would go a long way to win them. Another time, when these same Pharisees were making a parade of their prayer, He told another tale of a publican's prayer which was better than any of theirs.

Like the publican in that story Zacchæus had often enough prayed; like other publicans round John the Baptist he had often asked himself: 'What shall I do?' He had heard of Jesus and His words and His deeds; as to other publicans about him, so to Zacchæus, this Man made a strong appeal. Often enough he had wished he could meet Him. But his position as chief of the publicans had always been in the way. On this particular evening, as he is making his way home from his counting-house in the town, filled it may be with the thoughts which were filling the minds of everyone at that moment, he becomes aware of the crowd that is following after him. He knows what it means; in the town he has already heard of the coming of Jesus. The news of that event was soon spread abroad. Now clearly Jesus is moving, and the people are coming with Him. How he would like to see Him, to study Him for himself, to discover if he could what manner of man this was who so stirred the people and who, above all, had so warm a place in His heart for men such as himself!

And yet what could he do? Zacchæus was a short man;

he would never be able to see Jesus through the crowd as He passed by. He did not dare to work his way through the throng; though they made room for a rich young man whom they respected, for men like him they would be sure to provide only mockery and contempt, and he did not care to be insulted. He knew what he would do. His garden and house were some distance up the road; his sycamore trees overhung the boundary wall separating these from the lane. The trees were just now in their fullest leaf; a man among the branches would hardly be noticed by anyone passing below. He would climb one of his trees, no one would know, as the crowd passed by he would have a full view of Jesus, and so satisfy at least his curiosity.

While the crowd in the road delayed the progress, Zacchæus had ample time in which to carry out his project. The trees, with their branches beginning close to the ground, were easy to climb; their broad leaves soon concealed him. But he was not so easily to escape. The procession came along, exultant and thoughtless, as is the way with an Asiatic multitude, until Jesus, the centre of it all, stood opposite the tree in which the chief publican lay hidden. At this spot He stood still; He looked up into the branches. There was no searching with His eyes, He knew exactly where Zacchæus was; more than that, the look He gave him was one of familiar recognition.

We are told by some authors, the writer of the Imitation of Christ is one, that there is no record in Scripture that Jesus ever laughed. Strictly speaking this may be so; nevertheless there are scenes in His life which can scarcely be imagined without a radiant smile, even unto laughter, dominating the whole picture. Such a scene would be that when, at the beginning, He met the shy and simple Philip in a village by the Jordan and called him to come after Him. Such a scene would that have been next day when He puzzled Nathanael by calling him 'a true Israelite in whom there was no guile'. At the marriage feast at Cana He must have smiled encouragement to those who obeyed Him. By the lake-side at Bethsaida when He called Simon and Andrew, and James and John, it must have been the same. Levi the publican of Capharnaum, the Widow of Naim, Mary of Magdala, the demoniac in the land of the Gerasenes,—all these knew the brightness of His smiling face. The Twelve knew it as a thing all their own that day when He invited them to come with Him and take a holiday. Then there was the meeting with the Canaanæan woman. There was the day when He blessed Simon Peter. There was that other day when the man born blind confessed Him to be God in the streets of Jerusalem. There was the gathering of the infants about Him but a few days ago across the Jordan. Indeed, throughout His life, from first to last, had there not been brightness and encouragement, even to laughter, in His countenance one might well wonder how He made so many happy in His presence.

But of all the scenes recorded in the New Testament none, it would seem, are more suggestive of humour than the one before us. The little man Zacchæus, hiding up among the leaves, an object of scornful amusement to the crowd at the best of times, let alone in this impossible position; an excited mob ready for any mirth, with their Hero of the moment in their midst; Jesus Himself, standing at that spot to the alarm of poor Zacchæus, looking straight up at him, turning his alarm to sheer terror, the people following with their eyes the direction in which Jesus looked; their detection of the culprit, the burst of amused laughter and raillery,—it is difficult to believe that there could be less than encouraging mirth on the face of Jesus as He met the gaze of the frightened publican. And His words are in keeping. They are encouraging; they are almost mirthful; they are very different from the cries of the mob around. Though these two had never met before, yet Jesus calls him by his name. Though Zacchæus was but a publican, yet does Jesus presume to do him honour. There is something assuring, even unto friendship, in His words as He calls to him

'Zacchæus
Make haste and come down
For this day I must abide in thy house.'

Surely there is merriment in that 'Make haste!' Surely that self-invitation to the publican's house is reminiscent of the merry-making long ago in the house of that other publican in Capharnaum.

Be that as it may, the look and the words completely altered things for Zacchæus. The Master had noticed him, had actually noticed him. He had called him by his name, and therefore in some way knew him. He had expressed a wish to meet him, more than that, He had done him the honour of inviting Himself to his house. In comparison with this what did anything else matter? Let the mob rail as it might, there was ample compensation here. Hurriedly Zacchæus scrambled down from his perch; he ran round to the gate that opened on the lane. By the time he reached it Jesus, too, was there; they met, the publican's joy knew no bounds.

In this way Jesus freed Himself from the noisy crowd. It was left outside, Zacchæus had been preferred to all the rest. Again we have the same reaction which has been seen many times already, and which in a very few days more is to have a terrible result. We have but just seen it described, after the healing of the two blind men:

'And all the people
When they saw it
Gave praise to God.'

Now, with cruel irony, the very next account of apparently the very same crowd in the very same place is this:

'And when all saw it
They murmured saying
That he was gone to be a guest
With a man that was a sinner.'

So hard, particularly here in Judæa, did prejudice such as this die. In Galilee He had dined openly with publicans and sinners, and only the Pharisees had been scandalized. In Percœa a month or two ago it had again been the Pharisees and Scribes who had complained of the class He allowed to come about Him. Here in Jericho it is the people themselves who 'murmur'. Better than the others they understand the significance of it all. If they believe, their faith will be more reliable than that of the rest, if they find fault, their murmurs will be more akin to those of the Pharisees and Scribes.

Meanwhile, at the gate before his house Zacchæus was beside himself with joy. Honour such as this he could never have expected; he must make some return. But to give this Man money would be an insult; it was known on every side that He lived, and would live always, a poor man. He knew what he would do. He would give to the poor, and in addition would make ample restitution for any extortion he had committed. A few days before, on the other side of the river, a rich young man had come to

Jesus, and Jesus had looked on him and loved him, and had in consequence invited him to

'Sell all thou hast
And give it to the poor.'

But that was a special case; that was for a chosen follower. Zacchæus was not one of these; he had not heard of that rich young man's invitation. Spontaneously, with a full heart, eager only to please the Man who had so honoured him, prompted by the grace that was flowing all about him, recalling the best thoughts and desires of the best days in his life, knowing well that what was best in himself would appeal most to the Man before him, magnificently, without further thought the publican made his *amende honorable :*

'Behold, Lord,
The half of my goods I give to the poor
And if I have wronged any man of anything
I restore him fourfold.'

Poor Zacchæus! He scarcely knew what he said. Yet has he all to himself the honour of the only confession recorded in the Gospels; and that not because of any miracle that had been wrought, or of any that was to come, but solely because of Him who had honoured him, and whom he in turn would honour.

And he received his reward; a full absolution there and then. In spite of appearances Zacchæus had proved himself a true Israelite; in him the Good Shepherd had illustrated His parable of the Lost Sheep.

'Jesus said to him
This day
Is salvation come to this house
Because he also is a son of Abraham
For the Son of Man is come
To seek and to save that which was lost.'

'This day!' In little more than a week a still fuller absolution beginning with these words would be given to a still greater penitent than Zacchæus; for the present this was enough.

104. The Parable of the Talents

Jesus did not follow Zacchæus to his house at once. The times were critical; talk of all kinds was going round among the people. His coming into the neighbourhood at this season had roused many rumours and conjectures. It was common knowledge that the authorities in the city had made up their minds to have His life should He ever again come into their neighbourhood ; it was no less clear that when He had gone to Ephraim a month or more ago He had done so to avoid them. Since then He had studiously kept out of the way. From Judæa He had gone through Samaria into Galilee and had thence loitered through Perœa ; and though now He had suddenly appeared again on the Judæan side of the Jordan, He could not suppose that in so short a time the anger against Him had calmed down. Clearly He had returned for a purpose ; He was not running into this danger for nothing. The Pasch would be the following week, when all Jewry would again be gathered in and round the Holy City ; could it be that now at last He was about to take the final step, and establish definitely the Kingdom of which He had so often spoken ?

Indeed there was much to be said for this conjecture. The Twelve in particular were convinced that something of the kind was imminent. Since they had left Ephraim His march round the country had been like a triumphant procession. During the course of His tour Pharisees had accosted Him, and had definitely asked Him when the Kingdom of God should come ; and He had answered, in most mysterious language it was true, but still in language which seemed to imply that the time was close at hand. Again, a propos of apparently nothing at all, He had come back upon the same subject. The Son of Man was about to announce Himself and men were refusing to believe in Him.

‘ The Son of Man when he cometh
Will he find, think you
Faith on the earth ? ’

Of late He had spoken much about entering the Kingdom. For instance, but a few days ago, with some little children about Him, He had said :

‘ Suffer the little children to come unto me
And forbid them not
For of such is the kingdom of God
The kingdom of heaven is for such
Amen I say to you

Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God
As a little child
Shall not enter into it.'

Almost immediately after, when a rich young ruler had turned away from Him, He had commented :

'Children
How hard it is
For them that trust in riches
To enter into the kingdom of God ?
And again I say to you
It is easier
For a camel to pass through the eye of a needle
Than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'

And when this had caused comment among the Twelve He had reassured them by the promise :

'Amen I say to you
That you who have followed me
In the regeneration
When the Son of Man shall sit on the seat of his majesty
You also shall sit on twelve seats
Judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'

Since that day He had seemed to have done with all loitering. He had hurried along without turning to right or left, so that His companions had become alarmed.

'And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem
And Jesus went before them
And they were astonished
And following were afraid.'

There could be no other explanation. The Kingdom was about to be founded ; when James and John, foreseeing it, had asked for special places in it, He had seemed to confirm their conclusion by speaking to them all about their duties as princes in the new regime.

So reasoned the Twelve ; it was the thought that buoyed them up as they followed Him yet again into the zone of danger. When He had last led them up they had said to one another :

'Let us go
And die with him' ;

now they were beginning to say :

'Let us go
And sit on thrones with him';

and their expectation they could not conceal from the friends they met in Jericho. Yes, there could be little doubt about it; He was going up to Jerusalem; He was going to ascend His throne. The prophecy of John the Baptist, which they all knew by heart, was about to be fulfilled; the King whom he had heralded was marching up the very road that John had pointed out.

Jesus knew what was in these men's minds. The Twelve had revealed it already, and He had not contradicted them; He would not contradict them now. For indeed what they thought was true; though the fact would be very different from what they imagined; He would soon declare Himself a King, and would be crowned and enthroned, but in a way they had never suspected. Therefore He would not contradict them; He would leave them in their belief; He would only give them a warning that would one day explain to them the problem of the next few days.

'And as they were hearing these things, he added and spoke to them a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately be manifested. He said therefore: A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. And calling his ten servants he gave them ten pounds, and said to them: Trade till I come. But his citizens hated him, and they sent an embassage after him saying: We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass that he returned, having received the kingdom, and he commanded his servants to be called to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. And the first came saying: Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said to him: Well done, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a little thou shalt have power over ten cities. And the second came saying: Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said to him: Be thou also over five cities. And another came saying: Lord, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee because thou art an austere man. Thou takest up what thou didst not lay down, and thou reapest that which thou didst not sow. He saith to him:

Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up what I laid not down and reaping that which I did not sow. And why then didst thou not give my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have exacted it with usury? And he said to them that stood by: Take the pound away from him, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. And they said to him: Lord, he hath ten pounds. But I say to you, To everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall abound; and from him that hath not even that which he hath shall be taken from him. And as for those my enemies who would not have me reign over them, bring them hither and kill them before me.'

The Parable of the Talents may be counted as the first of the great warning parables which take so prominent a place in these last days. Others there have been already, and these with sufficient threat in their conclusion; but now what we hear is so pointed and emphatic that His enemies could not, as we know, mistake their application. It is noticeable too how now more than ever He dwells upon the idea of the Kingdom. He had begun with it in the early days, and now with the same He concludes. The people had looked forward to it, now those who believed in Him, even shallowly, were expecting it at any moment. They should be humoured in their belief, for essentially it was true; but He would by parables warn them and refine their understanding.

More than once we have had to call attention to the perfect way the language of Jesus adapts itself to the people and circumstances among which He speaks; is it extravagant to see an instance of this in the parable here before us? It is spoken outside the city on the road going up from Jericho to Jerusalem. The publican, the head of the publicans, Zacchæus, was even then by His side; the minds of the crowd around Him were intent on only one thing, the coming of the King from across the Jordan to His Kingdom. Jericho was the city of wealth and luxury; where rich men had their villas, merchants their halting-places; where tales of foreign countries passed from mouth to mouth, of kingdoms acquired and lost, of the Arabian world and beyond; where money changed hands more plentifully than anywhere else in all Palestine, and therefore where men were most cognizant of banking, and money-lending, and interest. There was Zacchæus present to remind them of all this, the very personification of this money-changing interest, the chief of the money-handlers, despised for his trade but none the less feared and respected for his wealth and influence, and perhaps not a little imitated in their small way by those who affected most to despise him. The wealthy landowners of Jericho were there for but a small portion of the year, and the permanent citizens worked their lands and traded on their fruits for them in their absence. Herod passed to and fro that way from his fortress of Machærus to Jerusalem. The residence built by his father was even there on the road close by them ; not improbably he himself was there at that very moment, for a few days later he was certainly in Jerusalem, and pilgrims were gathering in the city at that time.

Therefore they were used, these men of Jericho, to merchant-princes passing out into the unknown, and fabulous tales were told among them of the lands and wealth these princes possessed ; were they well-born, were they sons of sheiks or rajahs, the possibilities of exaggeration were unbounded. And these princes knew the value to themselves of these rumours. They would foster them, they would bestow their largesse where it was wise ; they would lay out money to advantage, at the same time with a keen business eye to profit and loss, even in the smallest bargain. They would affect charity where charity was an advertisement, but in trade their instinct made them demand the last pound of flesh.

Thus they were respected and feared, but they were not loved ; respected and feared for the most part by those whose livelihood depended on them, and who in their absence looked to their affairs ; sullenly hated by the common herd who, when their backs were turned, did not conceal their detestation of them. Cowed by their presence, when they were gone they could be brave ; a prince in his absence might often hear truths about himself which he would never hear when at home.

In the hands of these men, and only in their hands, lay the means to wealth and worldly prosperity. Remain an honest labourer of Jericho, and you would always remain an honest labourer ; a tiller of the soil, a shepherd of sheep or goats, a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, there was not and there never would be any other opening for one such as this. But get into the employment of a merchant-prince, become a clerk, however humble, a steward, however contemptible, a manager of an estate however small, above all be trusted as an agent in one of his business transactions, and there was no knowing to what heights, of trust and therefore of wealth and power, one might not aspire. Such a man had only to make his master's money bear fruit, to show his books to be accurate, and he would find himself trusted with ever more and more. As for the way he had made his gains it would matter little. Let him only be honest with his employer, and let him produce a good balance, and his shrewd master would not let him go; indeed, there were instances of such men being taken off to lands far away and there put in charge of whole provinces.

All this Jesus weaves into the tale that He tells them. Higher up that road some months before He had caught the spirit of the place in the story of the traveller robbed on the way down to Jericho. Now He takes hold of another and more intimate feature of the life about them and out of it draws a warning with regard to the King that is to come, and the treatment He will receive, and the reward He will bestow upon both His friends and His enemies. But there is another feature; the tale distinguishes two classes of subjects, the servants, ten in number, and the citizens; and these last, it would seem in a general body, have no love for their master. Between them and him there is no bond other than that of ruler and subject. Like the Herod that ruled across the Jordan, like the Pilate that ruled in Judæa, the right to rule lay entirely in the strength to maintain it, and in nothing else. But if in that, then there followed the corollary of vengeance; the East has been always used to wholesale slaughter as the punishment for disloyalty.

Thus in point of fact the parable of the pounds is a combination of two stories. There is the story of some disloyal citizens and what happened to them; within this there is an inner story of the servants who had been particularly trusted. As we watch the dénouement we notice a third class, those to whom the master gave his orders. These, it can only be presumed, were the army he had brought with him from a far country; and to such a thing, again, the people of Judæa were only too well accustomed.

There is perhaps no parable in the New Testament so full of local colour as this parable of the Pounds.

105. The Supper in Bethania

It was the week before the Pasch, the last and the most eventful of all that He was to spend on earth. For six months now, since the Feast of Tabernacles in October, Jesus had concentrated on Jerusalem. He had opened His campaign in the Temple itself; there He had met with varied fortune; while the party of the Pharisees had begun with contempt, it had ended in fear and hatred. For on the other side it was only too evident that many of the people had been impressed. Murmurs had risen against the Pharisaic attitude, questions had been asked among the crowd which could not be answered; not only had some defied the threats of the priests but there remained a large middle party which it would require very little to win over to the cause of Jesus. All this had been particularly emphasized by the healing of the man born blind. By a foolish blunder the court of the Pharisees had taken up this case, and had made itself ridiculous before all the world. Since that time they had been both more cautious and more determined; while they had outwardly treated Jesus with greater deference, and had affected to be earnest enquirers, in their secret conclave they had determined once for all that on some pretext or other He must be put to death.

Since the Feast of Tabernacles He had twice returned to the city, and His visit had only confirmed both His friends and His enemies in their respective attitudes. In the intervals He had been found in the towns and villages between Jerusalem and the Jordan, the country hallowed by the memory of John; and there by further miracles had yet more won the favour of the people. Still for the most part He had kept away. He had spent much time in Peræa; He had gone off to Ephraim, and thence to Samaria and Galilee; therefore His enemies could count on this, that they had to some extent at least made Him afraid to stay too long in their neighbourhood. Even the report that He had raised a dead man from the tomb, at a place only an hour's walk from the city, had not been enough to win Him security, or to make Him rely on the influence He had gained.

When, then, the pilgrims now began to come up for the paschal season, they found the city in a state of excitement. As the groups arrived, particularly those from Galilee and Perœa, many enquiries were made of them as to His whereabouts, many marvelled that He had not come with them ; one who had boldly ventured into the city on the occasion of three festivals of less moment would surely not absent Himself now at the Pasch. But the pilgrims themselves were no less curious. For almost a year He had been seen but little in Galilee, and many had hoped that they might find Him here. They had heard of Him as being in Judæa, and they were still proud enough of their fellow-Galilæan to be ready to account Him their hero. Therefore, while the people of Judæa enquired of them, they too discussed the matter among themselves. As the camps on the slopes of Olivet and on the northern plain beyond the city expanded, the wonder grew among them that He was nowhere to be found.

‘ And the pasch of the Jews was at hand
And many from the country went up to Jerusalem
Before the pasch
To purify themselves
They sought therefore for Jesus
And they discussed one with another
Standing in the Temple
What think you
That he is not come to the festival day ? ’

But these men from the country soon learnt the condition of the atmosphere in Jerusalem. They soon discovered that His very name was a dangerous topic ; the discussion of Him was a far more deadly affair here in the Temple than ever it had been in Galilee. In Galilee they had followed Him for a time, but when they had tired of Him, when He had taught them ‘ hard sayings ’, they had merely left Him alone. Only in Nazareth had there been any question of His life, and that had come from boorish stupidity rather than from any religious fanaticism. But in Jerusalem it was very different. Here the Pharisees were masters, and the people were awake to their spirit. Jerusalem was nothing if it was not religious ; if the citizen of Jerusalem was not eaten up with zeal for his Temple and its worship he was a poor citizen. On this the Pharisees had traded ;

they had published an edict in Jerusalem which they could never have published elsewhere. Assuming their usual bold front they had issued a warrant for His arrest; if anyone knew of His place of hiding notice was to be giver to them.

'And the chief priests and the Pharisees
Had given a commandment
That if any man knew where he was
He should tell
That they might apprehend him.'

Meanwhile Jesus was making His way up the road from Jericho to Bethania. It is to be presumed that He spent the night as He had said He would in the house of Zacchæus; thence to Bethania would be a journey of less than a day; it is a distance of some twenty miles. He would arrive there towards evening. In the town were many who would be glad to welcome Him; in Bethania, more it would seem than anywhere else, Jesus had friends. He had always had friends there, but now since the raising of Lazarus from the tomb there were many who would do Him honour. In Bethania even those who would naturally be His enemies were disposed to show Him deference and kindness. It was six days before the Pasch, therefore in our numbering a Friday, the eve of the Sabbath, when Jesus arrived in the little town.

He had not been there since He had raised Lazarus from the tomb. All that time the once dead man had been about, a living witness for all who were willing to believe; his sisters, too, Martha and Mary, had made the place ring again during these days with the joy they could not repress. When, then, He arrived, it was inevitable that something unusual would be done to honour Him. Let Jerusalem treat Him as it liked, the men of Bethania could not but recognize the greatness of Him who again favoured them with His presence. On the Friday, till the Sabbath began, there was much coming in and going out. The Sabbath imposed a check on all this, and the people had to be content with His presence among them at the synagogue. But scarcely had the Sabbath sun gone down than all were again alive; they would give Jesus that night a great celebration.

It would appear that He had accepted the hospitality of one Simon, a great man in the town; a man of means, owning one of the largest houses, who once had suffered from leprosy but had been healed; hence his name, 'the Leper'. In Simon's house, therefore, on that Saturday night, a solemn banquet was prepared for Him. Other magnates had been invited, among them, of course, Lazarus that had been dead; these, with Jesus and His Twelve, made a large company. Nor was the serving left to the common menials. Ladies of the town were honoured to attend, chief of whom was Martha, who came down from her house on the hill-side, glad to do again for Him here what she had often enough done for Him in her own home. Jesus condescended to them; He let them do all this; one wonders at the easy humble way He accepted invitations to banquets wherever they were offered to Him.

But among those who were gathered there to honour Him and serve Him one was missing whom He dearly loved. Lazarus His friend had come, but Mary had not; Martha had come, but her sister Mary had not. As on that other occasion she had remained at home. She would wait till the festivities were over; public rejoicings were nothing in her way. When they were over perhaps He would visit them in their home; and then she could sit at His feet alone, and both would understand. That she did not come with the others all the rest would accept; they were accustomed to these different, independent ways of Mary, and had long since learnt to leave her to herself.

Still as she sat in her house alone she could not help thinking. There was a banquet being held; everyone was there; even at that moment He was reclining at the table. Her thoughts went back to that happiest hour of her life, up there at Magdala, when she had been a desperate outcast and He had lifted her out of her misery. The whole scene came before her; the great men gathered round the table, Himself in their midst, her own reckless deed, the agony of her sorrow, the suddenness with which it was all transformed, the friendship which He gave her. From that moment she had dwelt on this again and again; the thought of it had been her life; in her own way, whenever she had been able, she had renewed the joy of it by coming to His feet.

Suddenly the thought came to her; why to-night should she not here in Bethania, where she was better known, repeat the joy of that meeting? What greater thank-offering could she make? It would be different now. Then men were scandalized, but this time they would not be; she would turn her offering into a further mark of honour, becoming the festival yet transcending all that the others had done to honour Him. She had ointments still in her possession of the very best; to pour such on kings and honoured guests was recognized as among the greatest marks of honour that one could show. He should have it all; He should have the very best she had to give. Mary was quick to act, Mary put no limits to her gifts; scarcely had the thought formed itself in her mind than she was on her feet. She sought out her richest spikenard, such as few possessed even in respectable Bethania. It was kept in an alabaster box that it might not evaporate; to pour it out the box had to be broken. Down the street she hurried with her treasure, as she hurried that day when she had heard that He had come and had asked for her. As she passed, men looked at her and let her go by; it was only Mary, doing odd impetuous things as usual.

She knew where Simon lived, and she knew that Jesus was there; in a very few minutes she was among them all. Her eyes went round the room. She saw Him; she ran towards Him; where He reclined she stood above Him. There was deadly silence for a moment. She held her hands above His head. In the midst of the silence there was heard a sound of something breaking in her fingers; a little oil flowed out upon His hair, instantly the room was filled with a delicious aroma, one of those secrets of the East. Then, with the memory of that other banquet in her heart she fell at His feet; that was her right place and there she would be. Tenderly she grasped those feet; not now with the tears of that day, but with the oil that still lingered in her hands she anointed them; at last, as she had done then, so now she loosened her hair and wrapt those feet in its folds.

‘ Mary therefore
When he was at meat
Took an alabaster box of precious ointment
A pound of right spikenard
Of great price
And breaking the alabaster box

She poured it out upon his head
As he was at table
And anointed the feet of Jesus
And wiped his feet with her hair
And the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.'

The guests looked on in silence. On the first occasion they had wondered, and had been tempted to be scandalized. They had been inclined to take what the woman then was permitted to do as proof that He could be no prophet. This time it was the opposite ; if He were a prophet, then what the woman did was only a becoming tribute.

' Moses filled his hands
And anointed him with holy oil
This was made to him
For an everlasting testament
And to his seed as the days of heaven
To execute the office of the priesthood
And to have praise
And to glorify his people in his name
He chose him out of all men living
To offer sacrifice to God
Incense and a good savour
For a memorial
To make reconciliation for his people
And he gave him power in his commandments
In the covenants of his judgements
That he should teach Jacob his testimonies
And give light to Israel in his law.'
Ecclesiasticus xlv, 18–21.

So in the sacred Books was described the anointing of Aaron, and these men knew what it meant. This woman, in doing what she did, was honouring Him even as they.

No, it was not from them this time that any complaint arose ; this time it came from His own. Poor Galilæans, they were not as acquainted with this kind of thing as the men of Judæa. Poor countrymen who dealt mainly in fish, they could not understand such wanton extravagance. Poor labourers, who had much ado to make ends meet, and yet were expected to give alms to those poorer than themselves, they could only judge an action of this kind in one way.

Naturally their thoughts went that way. Nevertheless, had no one led them, they would have recovered and accepted His acceptance. But there was one among them who influenced them ; Judas, the man of common sense, the keeper of the purse, who looked so well after them, who saw to it that nothing was wanting, who was so trusted by the Master Himself. Many a time had he been put to great straits to provide what was needed ; and though he had always succeeded in the end, yet of late in particular he had grown tired of the burthen. To what was all this leading ? They had heard so much of the Kingdom, what sign or hope was there of its coming ? These last few months the Master had been ever on the move, not daring to stay for long in any place. He had many times spoken in mysterious terms about His being delivered up and put to death. The Pharisees and priests, the masters of the people, He knew only too well were determined to destroy Him. Was it not wise to look facts in the face, and to make provision for whatever might come ?

So Judas had argued with himself this long time back, and had begun to act accordingly. He was the keeper of the purse ; he had the care of the others ; that he should receive due compensation for his service was only just and right. Jesus Himself had said : 'The workman is worthy of his hire', therefore He sanctioned the principle ; the conscience of Judas had hardened, and he had become used to setting aside for himself this his due allowance. All this had made him more careful ; he had begun to calculate. Jesus did foolish things, wasteful things ; were it not for Judas He would long since have been utterly destitute.

When, then, he saw this silly woman so uselessly wasting her substance in this manner, the whole soul of Judas was stirred. He knew her well enough ; after all she was only the sinner of Magdala, and though she had reformed yet she had not wholly laid aside her extravagant ways. The fact that she still had such luxuries as this about her was proof enough that she had yet much to learn. Only the other day Jesus had told a rich young man in Percœa that if he would be perfect he should go and sell all that he had and give it to the poor ; Mary might well take this lesson to herself. Had she done that, what a treasure his purse would now contain! He knew the price of ointment such as this; three hundred pence at least. He could contain himself no longer, to protest was no more than his right, his duty.

'Then one of his disciples
Judas Iscariot
He that was about to betray him said
Why was not this ointment sold
For three hundred pence
For more than three hundred pence
And given to the poor?'

To which the Evangelist significantly adds:

'Now he said this
Not because he cared for the poor
But because he was a thief
And having the purse
Carried the things that were put therein.'

The words of Judas fell on welcome ears. Had he said nothing, the rest might have acquiesced and waited, as they always did when they were mystified. Now when they heard him, speaking with so much obvious common sense, expressing so exactly what was in their own minds, how could they but give him their support? These women! They would always be taking advantage of Jesus. If ever He gave them an inch they would promptly take an ell; they were never satisfied. In the last few days the Twelve had had only too many examples. There was the affair with the mothers and their babies on the other side of the Jordan, and there was the impertinence of Salome asking for special rank for her sons. True, in both cases Jesus had yielded. But He always did; He seemed never to be able to refuse a woman anything. They must forestall Him; they must let Mary know what she had done; they must let others see that they themselves did not hold with all this extravagance.

'And the disciples seeing it
Had indignation within themselves and said
To what purpose
Is this waste of the ointment made?
And they murmured against her.'

So emphatically even after all these months of intimate union with Jesus, could these men think and speak and act in His company! It was within a week of His death, and yet at this hour how little did they know Him!

But again Jesus had patience with them. They had many things yet to learn, and to the end He would go on teaching them. As for Judas, He would not blame him, though He knew what another short week would reveal. He would give His lesson to them all, and Judas might learn with the rest. And as for Mary, apart from all else, what she had done, however extravagant, was an act prompted by love. If before many sins had been forgiven her because she had loved much, now, when there was nothing to forgive, a new sanction should be put upon her deed. They would not now understand but one day they would; and then they would vie with one another in preserving her name and what she had that day done. Of all the men and women that came into His life none should be better known to posterity, none should be more cherished, than Mary Magdalen.

'Jesus therefore knowing it said to them
Let her alone
Why do you trouble this woman?
For she hath wrought a good work upon me
For the poor you have always with you
And whensoever you will
You may do them good
But me you have not always
She hath done what she could
For in pouring this ointment upon my body
She is come beforehand
To anoint my body for the burial
Amen I say to you
Wheresover this gospel shall be preached
In the whole world
That also which she hath done
Shall be told for a memorial of her.'

This little insight into the heart of Jesus is the last we are given before He enters on the week of the Passion; His last words before Palm Sunday have to be a rebuke of His own. And they are a rebuke of their want of sympathetic charity; it is the third in the last few days. They had tried to keep from Him the mothers with their children and

He had rebuked them; they had tried to silence the two blind men outside Jericho and He had overruled them; now they had found fault with Mary's act of heroic love, and He was compelled to bid them let her be. She had done a good act, that they had not denied; it was only the cost of it that troubled them. But surely a good act done for Him was not to be measured by a specious argument; was the giving of money the only, or even the chief good they could do for the poor? Had they forgotten all the rest they could do, all they had already done? Had they forgotten His promise, that if they sought first the Kingdom of God and His justice all else would be added unto them? He had warned them more than once to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. He had warned them but lately of the danger of putting their trust in wealth. He had explained to them that the leaven of the Pharisees was hypocrisy, mere appearances; there was no hypocrisy, no show, more to be dreaded for His own than the hypocrisy, the show which came of wealth. Not by such means was His Kingdom to be spread.

His words were not severe; He was too near His end for severe words to His own, and, as His next sentence shows, even at that moment He had the end in mind.

'She hath done what she could.'

Poor child! She knew not what she did; she only knew that somehow she would show her love, and would show it at a great cost. But He would give her act a full meaning. In a few days this woman would again be at His feet, but they would be cold and bleeding. She would long to heal them, or if not that to anoint them again, and she would not be able. Then beforehand she should have this consolation; in the darkness of the days that followed she would recall His words:

'In pouring this ointment upon my body
She is come beforehand
To anoint my body for the burial.'

And as for the prophecy that He spoke, one may say with truth that throughout the world, Christian and pagan, there is no story better known than that of Jesus and Mary Magdalen. There is none by means of which Jesus has more often entered into the hearts of those who before had not known him. Again Mary went away a happy woman; she knew in whom she believed.

Meanwhile during these last four-and-twenty hours the news of His coming spread far and wide. Between Bethania and Jerusalem was Olivet; already its slopes had begun to be studded with the camps of the pilgrims, while the further groups that passed through Bethania up to the Holy City carried the information with them. There was still time before the paschal celebrations occupied all their attention; people therefore came out in numbers to see Him. But not only Him; Bethania had now become identified with the story of Lazarus, and to see a man who had been dead and buried, and now was alive, was worth a longer journey than a walk over Olivet. It would seem, and it was very intelligible, that Lazarus had hidden himself much away; he could not but resent this unseemly curiosity. But now that Jesus was again among them he had not shrunk from appearing. He was glad that Jesus who had called him His friend, and had wept for his loss, should receive all the glory that his presence should bring Him.

'A great multitude of the Jews
Knew that he was there
And they came
Not for Jesus' sake only
But that they might see Lazarus
Whom he had raised from the dead.'

One crime leads to another. A few months ago it had been decided that it was 'expedient that one man should die for the people'; now the expedience was beginning to include two. We have seen that when Lazarus was raised from the tomb there were onlookers about who still doubted. They held it their duty to suspend their judgement for the present, and to communicate the news of what had happened to the priests of the Temple that they might decide upon the strange occurrence. As it had been in the case of the healing of the man born blind so was it here; it was a matter for the ecclesiastical courts, not for their own conscience.

But the chief priests were not to be caught a second time. They had judicially gone into the blind man's story; they had persisted in their attitude, first of contempt, and then of philosophic doubt, and they had only ended in lowering themselves before the eyes of the people. By that proceeding they had definitely lost ground; they had found no other way of recovering their prestige than by deciding at any cost to have the Healer's life. Now with Lazarus they would be more cautious. Should they institute another court of enquiry, in what would it end? Lazarus was there in Bethania alive, that could not be denied. He had been three days in the tomb, that too could not be gainsaid. To argue that he was not dead when he was buried would be a dangerous proceeding. No, there was only one escape. The only serious witness was Lazarus himself; if he could be got out of the way the rest of the story might be lived down. Lazarus, then, as well as Jesus, must die. Dead men had no right to live again; above all, dead men who by living interfered with the loyalty of the people to the Temple.

'And the chief priests thought to kill Lazarus also
Because many of the Jews
By reason of him
Went away
And believed in Jesus.'

CHAPTER XXXV

106. The Procession of Palms

THE last week before the Passion thus opens with a decided spirit of battle in the air. On the one side the chief priests of the Temple, who from the very first had only too accurately suspected what the preaching of John and the coming of Jesus meant, now saw clearly that whether He was the Christ or not His victory meant their doom. They saw moreover that He had on His side that which they had not; a sinless personality, which none had been able to smirch, while them He had openly called a 'wicked and adulterous generation'; an invincible power of speech, speaking as He did 'as never man spoke', while they concealed their blindness in a maze of hesitating queries; the indubitable power of miracles, which could only be set aside by being attributed to diabolic influence. Each of these had told against them, and they had nothing to offer in their stead; so long as He lived, and was permitted to use His power, their destruction was inevitable. Therefore they had put forth all the authority they could muster; they had ordered that any who supported Him should be turned out of the synagogues, they had issued instructions that His whereabouts should be made known to them, they had emphasized in their instructions the need of being faithful children of Abraham, faithful followers of Moses, faithful worshippers in the Temple; if men were good Jews they would guard themselves from infiltrations that came from doubtful places like Nazareth in Galilee.

These men had still a large following behind them. First and foremost was that great solid body of Jewry which had been for centuries brought up in its essential exclusiveness; the Law and the prophets only, the Law and the prophets as Jerusalem read them, anathema to everything else. This rock of unconsidering prejudice, so long as the chief priests held it, nothing would ever remove; and it contained the bulk of the people of the city, the lowest strata, the men of the bazaar, the upper classes whose religion was the one that was most in fashion, the rich men whose wealth depended in great measure on the stability of the Temple and its worship. Besides these were the time-servers, who knew the power of the priests and were satisfied with that ; many of them, it may be, shallowly sincere, but with whom the truth for its own sake was not the first motive. Lastly were many solidly devoted lovers of God and the Law ; misguided, misinformed, but none the less convinced that God was with them and not with Him whom they were taught to shun.

But on the side of Jesus the gathering was also large. To begin with there were most of the pilgrims from Galilee and Peroea and elsewhere, who, as has been said, looked on Him as in some sense a hero of their own. His success was theirs ; should He restore the Kingdom to Israel that would be a final humiliation for their haughty kinsmen in Jerusalem. Then in Judæa, outside the city, it had long been manifest that He could count upon many adherents. There were the converts of the Baptist. Since his death they had given a willing ear to Jesus ; in return He had worked miracles among them. It is significant that during all the coming week, though He dared not spend a night in Jerusalem, among them He knew He was safe. Finally in the city itself He had many who believed in Him, and those of every station, either openly or in secret, from Pharisees like Nicodemus, and wealthy men like Joseph, to the numbers of the common people of the town who refused to betray Him. These were a check upon His enemies ; it would not do to offend them. But they were unorganized ; they came from all parts, in many things they were divided among themselves. Though in the open they must not be roused to anger, still by a clever *coup d'état* it would be possible to paralyse them and keep them under.

With the minds of men so taut yet so divided it was inevitable that feeling should run high when Jesus again appeared at the foot of Olivet. His supporters had been disappointed and were now relieved ; they were prepared for any extravagance of enthusiasm. His enemies had been jubilant and were made to pause ; it was evident that now, not only as before on their own ground, but also in their own special season, He was about to defy them. They would need to redouble their caution.

It was Sunday morning, the day after the supper in Bethania. The sun had risen over the Arabian hills and was shining full on the little town with the slope of Olivet behind it. Lower down the valley, where the two roads parted, was the smaller village of Bethphage. As the day grew, and men were now astir, Jesus called two of His disciples to Him; such was His custom when He would send them on an errand. They were to go down to Bethphage to the meeting of the roads; there they would find an ass and her colt tethered. They were to bring them to Him; they would find all would be well.

'And it came to pass on the next day
When he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethania
Unto the mount called Olivet
Then Jesus sendeth two of his disciples
And saith to them
Go ye into the village that is over against you
And immediately at your coming in thither
You shall find an ass tied
And a colt with her
Upon which no man yet hath sat
Loose them
And bring them to me
And if any man shall ask you
What are you doing
Why do you loose him
You shall say thus unto him
Because the Lord hath need of his service
And forthwith he will let them come hither.'

As we read this passage we feel the change that has come over the narrative of all the four Evangelists; or at least of three, for in S. John the transition comes a little later. The Master from this moment, far more than at any time before, takes matters into His own hands. He looks into the distance and into the future, He describes what He cannot naturally know, He makes use of all things as if He were the lord of all, He commands and without a word everyone will obey, He is as sure of that obedience as He is of the word of command that He utters. From this moment to the end of the four Gospels the Master is the Master indeed, the King of the Jews in its fullest sense; the paradox of Passion Week is one more, and the sublimest, added to the many which we have to record; Jesus the Master, Jesus the meek; Jesus the King, Jesus the criminal; Jesus the Judge, Jesus the convicted; Jesus the Priest, Jesus the Victim; Jesus who saved others, Jesus who could not save Himself.

As they describe this opening scene the Evangelists are aware that they are describing something momentous, that a new phase has begun. S. John goes out of his way to let us know that at the time they did not notice it, only afterwards did they realize what it all meant.

'These things his disciples did not know at the first
But when Jesus was glorified
Then they remembered
That these things were written of him
And that they had done these things to him.'

But later they did realize. On that great day the King had gone into His city; on that day one of the greatest of the prophecies had been fulfilled; on that day Jerusalem had received, had it only known it, the crowning of its own existence. To that day Isaias had looked forward when he had sung his song of victory:

'For Sion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest, till her just one come forth as brightness, and her saviour be lighted as a lamp. And the Gentiles shall see thy just one, and all kings thy glorious one; and thou shalt be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name. And thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God; thou shalt no more be called Forsaken, and thy land shalt no more be called Desolate; but thou shalt be called my pleasure in her, and thy land Inhabited, because the Lord hath been well pleased with thee, and thy land shall be inhabited. For the young man shall dwell with the virgin, and thy children shall dwell in thee; and the bridegroom shall rejoice over the bride, and thy God shall rejoice over thee.

'Upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never hold their peace. You that are mindful of the Lord, hold not your peace, and give him no silence, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

'The Lord hath sworn by his right hand and by the arm of his strength: Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thy enemies, and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine for which thou hast laboured. For they that gather it shall eat it and shall praise the Lord, and they that bring it together shall drink it in my holy courts.

'Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people; make the road plain, pick out the stones, and lift up the standard to the people. Behold, the Lord hath made it to be heard in the ends of the earth: tell the daughter of Sion: Behold thy Saviour cometh. Behold his reward is with him and his work before him. And they shall call them the Holy People; the Redeemed of the Lord. But thou shalt be called a city sought after and not forsaken.' (Isaias lxii, 1–12.)

Yet more pertinently another and a later prophet had added:

'Rejoice greatly
O daughter of Sion
Shout for joy
O daughter of Jerusalem
Behold thy king will come to thee
The just and saviour
He is poor
And riding upon an ass
And upon a colt the foal of an ass.'
Zacharias ix, 9.

Yes, they saw it all later, but for the moment they were too preoccupied. Later they understood that this day was indeed the day of the triumph of the King, a triumph befitting His birth, and life, and teaching, and the Kingdom itself which He founded; but now they were mainly awed by the command that was in His voice, and the certainty in His eyes, and the quiet mastery that covered Him as a cloak. They knew that manner; yet had they never seen it so overpowering as now, not even on that day when He had made the five thousand sit down upon the grass and had fed them, and had then sent them to their homes.

The two disciples did as they were bid. They went down the lane to the place where the other road branched off, running round the foot of Olivet. There stood the little village of Bethphage, with its mud wall round it, and its main gate looking towards Bethania and Jerusalem, a village that marked the first halt for travellers from the Holy City. There at the gate, where the two roads forked, were an ass and a colt tethered to a stake, waiting no doubt to be hired by any passer-by who might be in need of assistance on his journey. Standing at a distance on the roadside were the owners, in that careless negligence characteristic of the East; only an Eastern would know that the ass and her colt belonged to them. The disciples took no notice of them; they thought only of their Master and His words. He had said they would find the ass and her colt, at a certain place, in a certain position, and they had found them exactly as He had said. He had told them to loose them and bring them to Him without asking any leave, and they would do as He bade them; if questions were asked He had given them their reply.

Naturally questions were asked. The owners could not easily allow such liberties with their property. They would know these men; they were followers of Jesus of Nazareth, men from Galilee on their way up to Jerusalem for the Pasch; no doubt they wished to hire the ass to help them over Olivet. These owners were well disposed; they were among those who had learnt in these parts to respect the name of Jesus. Still such utter disregard of their rights could not pass without a protest.

'And as they were loosing the colt
The owners thereof that stood there said to them
What do you loosing the colt?
Who said to them
As Jesus had commanded them
Because the Lord hath need of him.'

Again it had happened exactly as the Master had foretold. They were living in a dream, as if somehow all this was only a repetition of something they had lived through before, and this was only the more impressed upon them when without another word the owners gave way and

'Let him go with them.'

To help Jesus on His journey was its own sufficient payment to these men.

The disciples drove the ass and her colt up the road. As they went along they could feel enthusiasm and elation growing in them. What it portended they could not say;

but to-day they felt returning the confidence of two years ago when not far away they had first hailed Him as

‘The Messiah
Him of whom Moses foretold
The Son of God
The King of Israel.’

Somehow always in Judæa, more than anywhere else, the thought of the Kingship took hold of them; and only in Judæa, not anywhere else, did He allow them to think of Him as a King.

When they reached Bethania they discovered that they were not alone in their enthusiasm; they found the whole town astir. This return of Jesus into Bethania had reawakened all the excitement that had been roused by the raising of Lazarus. It had done more, it had fanned it into a flame, for there had been the intervening weeks in which men had come to realize better what had been done. And this excitement was not to be satisfied by the mere banquet of the night preceding. More than in Galilee the fever had caught the people; if in Galilee they would crowd round about Him, and one time proclaim Him a prophet, and another time wish to make Him King, here in Judæa deeds would go further than words, and here He would let them have their way. As the disciples advanced with the ass and the colt, and it was evident that Jesus intended to go forward that morning to Jerusalem, they determined to go with Him; more than that, they would take Him in honour all the way.

At once there was further commotion. He wished to ride over Olivet? Then should He ride as one in triumph. They ran to their houses; they brought out their best garments and spread them upon the ass and her colt; they bade Him mount upon one of them; in their simple way they would emulate that scene when Solomon rode to his coronation.

‘And they set Solomon upon the mule of king David
And brought him to Gihon
And Sadoc the priest took a horn of oil
Out of the tabernacle
And anointed Solomon
And they sounded the trumpet
And all the people said

God save king Solomon
And all the multitude went up after him
And the people played with pipes
And rejoiced with a great joy
And the earth rang with the noise of their cry.'

3 Kings i, 38–40.

Thus the men of Bethania began the march up the eastern slope of Olivet; the men of Bethania and many more, who had come from all parts, no less enthusiastic because of what He had done to Lazarus. As the procession came along, the news went forward up the hill that He was coming that way. At once from the pilgrims encamped upon the slopes, from those in the valley of Kedron, then from more in the city, groups thronged out to meet Him, delighted that at last, after these days of suspense, they had found Him. They easily caught the excitement; they too must shew it in their own way. Some scrambled up the palm trees that grew in abundance by the road, others seized on whatever leafy boughs they could find. As the procession came along they waved them to and fro, they spread them along the way that the ass might walk upon them; not content with that, many took the very coats off their backs that they might make a carpet for Him to pass over. It was a wonderful procession, a glorious manifestation. Many Galilæans were triumphant; what He had refused from them in their own country He was willing to accept from them here. He was their countryman, their King, whom even the Judæans were acknowledging.

Soon in the midst of the noise and confusion the whole procession found its voice. As they reached the summit of the ascent, a little south of the highest point, and the city gleamed white and the Temple gold on the opposite slope beneath them,

'The whole multitude of his disciples
Began with joy to praise God
With a loud voice
For all the mighty works they had seen
And they that went before
And they that followed
Cried saying
Hosanna to the son of David
Blessed is he

Blessed is the king
Who cometh in the name of the Lord
The king of Israel
Blessed be the kingdom of our father David
That cometh
Peace in heaven
And glory on high
Hosanna in the highest.'

'Give praise to the Lord for he is good
For his mercy endureth for ever
Let Israel now say that he is good
For his mercy endureth for ever
Let the house of Aaron now say
That his mercy endureth for ever
Let them that fear the Lord now say
That his mercy endureth for ever
In my trouble I called upon the Lord
And the Lord heard me and enlarged me
The Lord is my helper
I will not fear what man can do to me
The Lord is my helper
And I will look over my enemies
It is good to confide in the Lord
Rather than to have confidence in man
It is good to trust in the Lord
Rather than to trust in princes
All nations compassed me about
And in the name of the Lord I have been revenged on them
They surrounded me like bees, and they burned like fire among thorns
And in the name of the Lord I was revenged on them
Being pushed I was overturned that I might fall
But the Lord supported me
The Lord is my strength and my praise
And he is become my salvation
The voice of rejoicing and of salvation is in the tabernacles of the just
The right hand of the Lord hath wrought strength
The right hand of the Lord hath exalted me
The right hand of the Lord hath wrought strength
I shall not die but live
And shall declare the works of the Lord

The Lord chastising hath chastised me
But he hath not delivered me over to death
Open ye to me the gates of justice
I will go into them and give praise to the Lord
This is the gate of the Lord
The just shall enter into it
I will give glory to thee because thou hast heard me
And art become my salvation
The stone which the builders rejected
The same is become the head of the corner
This is the Lord's doing
And it is wonderful in our eyes
This is the day which the Lord hath made
Let us be glad and rejoice therein
O Lord save us
O Lord give good success
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord
We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord
The Lord is God
And he hath shone upon us
Appoint a solemn day with shady boughs
Even to the horn of the altar
Thou art my God and I will bless thee
Thou art my God and I will exalt thee
I will praise thee because thou hast heard me
And art become my salvation
O praise ye the Lord for he is good
And his mercy endureth for ever.'

Psalm cxvii.

From this psalm the disciples quoted when they chose their song of thanksgiving as Jerusalem came in sight from the top of Olivet. This then was what was in their minds on that eventful day. The King had come, though in a way they had little expected ; the King had come, and He was Jesus Christ.

But there were others standing by who had very different thoughts. Orders had been published that when Jesus should appear notice should be given that He might be apprehended. He did appear, and not a soul dared to touch Him. In the midst of that assembly it would have been impossible ; the Pharisees could only stand aloof, and at the most express their disapproval. They could draw aside their garments as the despicable crowd passed by; they could store up in their hearts this scene as a proof, soon to be used with effect, that He made Himself a king, that 'He stirred up the people, beginning from Galilee even to this place'. They could convince themselves that all this was unseemly, was dangerous, so near to the Temple, so near to the palace of Pilate. They could lay the blame on Him and appeal to Him to put an end to this unholy din. They could appeal to Him to put an end to it; themselves they knew they could not, no matter what their authority. For once, in the sight of the city, they were ignored. They waited for Him to come near; in the narrow road it was easy to speak to Him. As He passed they spoke.

'Master', they said,
'Rebuke thy disciples.'

But they had their answer.

'To whom he said
I say to you
That if these shall hold their peace
The stones shall cry out.'

When in all His life had Jesus been more defiant of them than now? When had He spoken more 'as one having authority'?

And yet at this very moment we find Him at the opposite extreme. Once more we come across one of those paradoxes in His behaviour, and therefore in His nature, which we have met so often, and which defeat every attempt to define Him. The procession has scarcely passed the Pharisees by; at a bend of the road as it comes down the hill there opens before one the most perfect view of Jerusalem that can be gained from any point, with the Temple square in the foreground. Even to-day it is a moving sight; what must it have been to Him that morning, as He looked on it from that spot? Gethsemane a few yards beneath Him, Olivet a few yards above; behind Him in the distance the Dead Sea and the desert sands of Arabia, before Him Jerusalem and Calvary, and away in the further distance Rome. Yes, He would come to His own. Though these people about Him were to hold their peace, the very stones would cry out; He could look into the future and know that the Hosannas now being sung about Him would one day ring round the world.

And yet here in His beloved Jerusalem had He failed. The prophet had declared :

‘ The law shall come forth from Sion
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem ’ ;
Isaias ii, 3.

yet nowhere more than in Jerusalem had the word of the Lord been rejected. He had given it of His best ; never for a moment had He let it out of His range of vision ; in His most triumphant days in Galilee it was Jerusalem that remained His goal.

Nevertheless the city of His Father’s choice had failed Him ; the city of His own love had refused Him. The Kingdom would indeed be founded but it would not be at that centre. The old Jerusalem would give way to a new ; this time its fall would be irreparable. He looked into the future ; He saw the doom not many years ahead. If He could weep over Lazarus whom yet He would raise to life, much more could He weep over His beloved city that would never be His own.

‘ And when he drew near
Seeing the city
He wept over it saying
If thou hadst known
And that in this thy day
The things that are to thy peace
But now they are hidden from thy eyes
For the days shall come upon thee
And thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee
And compass thee round
And straiten thee on every side
And beat thee flat to the ground
And thy children who are in thee
And they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone
Because thou hast not known
The day of thy visitation.’

The traveller to-day is appalled at the literal fulfilment of this prophecy. He walks through a town, decrepit and shapeless, built more than twenty feet above the town that Jesus knew, and all those twenty feet are filled with the flattened débris of the great past. He walks round the city walls, to east and south and west, and the slopes of the ravines are no longer the slopes which Jesus saw. These are again buried twenty feet or more beneath the mass of rubbish cast down from the level above on which the city stood. The pool of Siloe has been dug out of it; other attempts have been made, and have discovered houses, perhaps whole villages, buried beneath the refuse. When the day of reckoning came it would seem that the Romans were determined to do their work well. They swept the place bare, throwing every stone that stood upon another ruthlessly over the hill-side. Except in the built-up foundations, we look in vain for a stone upon a stone that stood there in the time of Jesus.

The procession passed down the hill, leaving Gethsemane on the left, crossed the bridge that spanned the brook Kedron, went up the rise on the other side, and entered through the Golden Gate into the Temple area. There it did not cease its exultation. In spite of the business going on in the outer court, preparing for the Paschal Festival, it made itself felt all around. Men stood still at their work and wondered what this meant. Was it another Galilæan demonstration? Would the soldiers of Pilate be compelled to shoot down on them again, as they had shot on the crowd a few months before, in order to quell them? Yet no, it could not be this. With all its commotion it was an orderly and a happy crowd. It was not a crowd seeking something, and prepared to fight for its own. It was a crowd that rejoiced in the possession of something that it had attained. What was it? Who was it? At first the people in the city could not guess.

'And when he was come into Jerusalem
The whole city was moved saying
Who is this?
And the people said
This is Jesus the prophet
From Nazareth of Galilee.'

Before, in Jericho, it had been simply

'Jesus of Nazareth';

now it was

'Jesus the prophet
From Nazareth of Galilee.'

On the last occasion it would seem that He came to the Temple alone; now He came with all this retinue. On both accounts, because of the retinue, because of the title they gave Him, it was a direct challenge to all in the Temple court.

The work of the day was done ; the demonstration had been made and it was enough. The spell that had seemed to bind this enthusiastic crowd was removed and it was free. Arrived in the Temple, there were other things to distract them. Gradually the enthusiasm died down, the crowd was dismissed and was lost in the throng, the ass and the colt were removed, Jesus found Himself walking through the court with the Twelve, comparatively alone. Yet not so much alone that the priests and rulers dared touch Him ; were they to make the attempt there would be danger that all this commotion would be stirred up anew. As He passed them like a Master they looked at Him, bitter hatred scarcely concealed on their faces. They looked at Him and turned aside, murmuring to one another :

‘ Do you see that we prevail nothing ?
Behold the whole world is gone after him.’

In return that day He took little notice of them. As the afternoon wore on He moved about, from court to court, from building to building. He seemed to be making a survey of His Father’s house, of His own inheritance. At evening, when the sun had sunk beyond the city, He went out by the gate by which He had entered ; His hour was not yet come, therefore He would not stay for His enemies to molest Him. As He looked across the valley from the city wall the camp fires on the hill beyond were beginning to shine out, where the pilgrims were preparing the evening meal. The new moon was already visible in the sky ; bats flew noiselessly about ; outside the walls a pariah dog would be scratching among refuse in the hope of food. Jesus crossed the valley ; He made His way up the slope of Olivet. At a point where He stopped to rest He turned round, and saw the lights of the town glittering in the darkness that by now had come over it. He could have wept again ; instead He turned and went with His Twelve over the hill to Bethania.

107. The Cursing of the Fig-tree

Thus had He opened this last assault upon the city by a triumphant demonstration. One who looked on might have concluded if he would what depths there were in His claim; that many were moved is certain, even of those who had not formed part of the great procession. But He would not continue in this strain. Though through all the rest of this momentous week, yes, even when He was most crushed, He could always prove Himself the Master, still He would suffer events to follow their own course. They should follow their own course but He would rule; He would rule, but at the appointed hour these men should be permitted to overcome Him. In the meantime, during these two days, there was much to be done, and while it was yet light He must work.

Thus we find Him at early dawn next morning once more on His way over Olivet to Jerusalem with His Twelve. It would seem that this night at least they had slept in no friend's house, for they set off on their journey fasting. It would seem that for once the scrip of Judas was empty; they set out on the way and were hungry. It is impressive to notice the part played in the life of Jesus, as it is given to us in the Scriptures, by common hunger and thirst and weariness. After His baptism the first thing we hear of Him is that He was hungry. Afterwards almost immediately we are shewn Him sitting hungry and thirsty and weary by a well, asking a woman to give Him to drink, He who but a few days later is seen changing water into wine to please a merry-making crowd, He who a few days before had refused to change stones into bread, though He had virtually acknowledged that if He would He could do so. On the side of the lake of Galilee He multiplied bread to feed first five thousand and then four thousand, because, as He said, He would not let them leave Him hungry; now on this morning He is hungry Himself and seeks for some alleviation. He saved others, Himself He could not save.

Yet another of these baffling paradoxes meets us in this scene. Yesterday, on the other slope of Olivet, we saw Him looking into the future and foretelling the doom of Jerusalem; to-day He is hungry, and is in need of food, and comes to a fig-tree in search of a little that will satisfy Him, as if He did not know whether He would find fruit upon it or not.

'And when he had seen afar off
A certain fig-tree by the wayside
Having leaves
He came

If perhaps he might find anything on it.
And when he was come to it
He found nothing
But leaves only
For it was not the time for figs.'

Commentators have written much upon this passage. They have discussed the fig and its growth, how it forms upon the tree before the leaves appear, how there are first season figs and second season, how it might not be the time for figs and yet figs might be expected to be there. All this we may pass over. Jesus knew what He was doing, and 'what He would do'; as on the plain before He fed the five thousand He enquired about the bread that might be at hand, only the more to emphasize the miracle that followed, so now He made as if He were disappointed, only that to-morrow a great truth might be stamped the deeper on the minds of His Twelve. He was hungry, as any man might be hungry. He sought to satisfy His hunger, as any man with a prospect of a hard day before him might seek to satisfy it. He saw the single fig-tree hanging over the road in front of Him, a long way up the hill, but seemingly the only hope of food of any kind in sight, and He made towards it as any hungry man might go. He knew it was not yet the season for ripe fruit; He was living in a land where figs were rich and common. Still there might be something that would serve. He found only leaves, apparently not even unripe figs; the fig-tree He chose, and He knew it, was utterly barren. Exteriorly the scene is simple enough, in itself scarcely worth recording; only the next day did the Twelve realize what it had meant.

Jesus looked at the tree with its profusion of leaves and promise. He looked along the branches for the bulging signs of fruit and there were none. Quietly yet firmly He spoke, words which the Twelve heard but at the moment scarcely noticed. A barren tree already, what He said only confirmed its barrenness, and that was nothing strange.

'And answering he said to it
May no man hereafter eat fruit of thee
Any more for ever.'

He said no more. They passed over the hill; no doubt on the other slope, when they came among their friends from Galilee, it would be easy to find food. Indeed it might have struck the Twelve as strange, and very unlike their Master that He should have sought to break His fast in any other way. They did not then see the effect of His words; that they would learn the next day, and would understand.

'And immediately the fig-tree withered away.'

108. Monday in the Temple

They came across the valley into the city as they had come the day before. And now again the spirit comes upon Him, that commanding spirit which when it comes everyone cannot but obey. He stood beneath the Golden Gate; He looked into the court beyond, and already in the early morning it was filling up with buyers and sellers. There were those who remembered what He had done at the Pasch two years before; how with a piece of cord He had driven all the traffickers before Him, with all their goods and chattels, helter skelter across the court till they poured themselves into the town through the Temple gates beyond. Since then He had come in and out and had done nothing. At the last Pasch He had not come up; He had spent it in Capharnaum and round about the lake. On other festivals He had passed about and had left the traffickers alone; men had gone back to their old ways, and the priests and ancients had encouraged them.

But to-day the same look was in His eyes again; again He was Lord of the Temple. Before, on His first official visit to His Father's house He had shown it; now, after the formal entrance of yesterday He will repeat the scene. He glanced round the court; the money-changers were seated at their tables within the gate, the sellers of doves for the sacrifices were a little way further inside; beyond, if there was less confusion and din than on the former occasion, for it was still some days before the great day, yet there was buying and selling going on all about, more than on normal days. He would have none of it; as before, with His foot He overturned the tables of the money-changers; for them He had particular contempt. Likewise He turned over the chairs of those who sold doves. He did not bid them go, as before; they knew what He was doing. The rest without a word He drove along before Him; His look and His manner were enough. There were others, too; labourers who, it may be, found the way through the

Temple court a short cut into or out of the city, and so made it a thoroughfare for the carting of their goods. These He turned back; He would have no such desecration; let them learn the right use of the house of God.

'And he taught saying to them
Is it not written
My house shall be called the house of prayer
To all nations
But you have made it a den of thieves,'
'The children of the stranger that adhere to the Lord
To worship him and to love his name
To be his servants
Everyone that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it
And that holdeth fast my covenant
I will bring them into my holy mount
And will make them joyful in my house of prayer
Their holocausts and their victims shall please me
Upon my altar
For my house shall be called the house of prayer
For all nations.'
Isaias lvi, 6, 7.

So had Isaias told of the gathering of all the world into one fold. On the other hand, with threatening in his words, Jeremias had spoken of the way the people of God used His house:

'Behold you put your trust in lying words, which shall not profit you; to steal, to murder, to commit adultery, to swear falsely, to offer to Baalim, and to go after strange gods which you know not. And you have come and stood before me in this house, in which my name is called upon, and have said: We are delivered, because we have done all these abominations. Is this house then in which my name hath been called upon, in your eyes become a den of robbers? I, I am he; I have seen it, saith the Lord. Go yet to my place in Silo where my name dwelt from the beginning, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now because you have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I have spoken to you, rising up early and speaking, and you have not heard, and I have called you, and you have not answered, I will do to this house in which my name is called upon, and in which you trust, and to the place which I have given you and your fathers, as I did to Silo ; and I will cast you away from before my face as I have cast away all your brethren, the whole seed of Ephraim' (Jeremias vii, 8–14).

Thus far this morning He had acted 'as one having authority'; He had cleansed His Father's house as we have seen Him cleanse it before. Still there would seem to be in His action on this day a greater gentleness than formerly ; though He drove out the buyers and sellers by the command that shone in His eyes, yet were there others about Him that day who were not afraid. The beggars on the Temple steps, the blind and crippled, gathered there as they always were but especially at times such as this ; these were not driven out, these were not alarmed. When the commotion had died down they crawled to His feet and awaited what would be. They came to Him and He received them ; they pleaded to Him and He heard them ; for the first time in the story of His abiding in Jerusalem we have explicit mention of His bestowing miracles in profusion. Hitherto we have heard only of isolated cases ; among the most striking of His works, it is true, yet made all the more conspicuous by their standing alone ; now the spirit of Galilee is upon Him and He heals them all. Once more we are confronted with Jesus, the mightiest and meekest of men.

'And there come to him the blind and the lame in the temple
And he healed them.'

But these were not all. In the court were children gathered and playing among themselves ; children who yesterday had joined in the song of welcome and had hailed Him with 'Hosanna to the Son of David'. These saw Him again amongst them ; for them there was no reason why they should change their song. As He stood upon the Temple steps, as the blind and the lame passed away with happy and exulting faces, these children took up the cry of yesterday and

'Hosanna to the Son of David'

began again to ring out.

All this time the priests had looked on and said nothing. They could not forget how they had fared two years before when they had ventured to protest ; they could not forget that whenever they had opposed Him in the Temple they had always been worsted. Still could they not but be moved with indignation. Again in their own domain He had taken matters into His own hands. Here on the very Temple steps He was performing those wonders—those tricks they wished to call them but did not dare—by which He had captured the common and ignorant people. They saw it all, they could say nothing. But when the children began to cry their hosannas, against this at least they could protest. This at least ill became the sacred precincts; if He would expel the buyers and sellers, let Him also silence these thoughtless, these irreverent children.

'And the chief priests
Seeing the wonderful things that he did
And the children crying in the temple and saying:
Hosanna to the Son of David
Were moved with indignation
And said to him
Hearest thou what these say?'

Yes, He had heard, and the heart of the child within Him had responded to it all. Up those very steps, more than thirty years ago, His mother had come and had presented Him, a Child, to His Father; on that very spot an old man Simeon and an old woman Anna had hailed Him as

'Salvation
Light for the revelation of the Gentiles
And the glory of thy people Israel.'

Where old age, the symbol of the past, had proclaimed Him at the beginning, it was fitting that children, the symbol of the future, should proclaim Him now. A few months ago, down towards Jordan, when it had at last become evident that the priests and the rulers would have none of Him, He had found consolation in the prayer:

'Heavenly Father
I give thee thanks
That thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent
And hast revealed them to little ones.'

A few days ago He had confirmed this by saying:

'Suffer the children to come to me
And forbid them not
For of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

It was not likely that this Lover of children would silence them now, even though their song was thoughtless and childish.

'And Jesus said to them : Yea
Have you never read
Out of the mouths of infants and of sucklings
Thou hast perfected praise ?'

He quoted to them a Psalm that was familiar to them :

'O Lord our Lord
How admirable is thy name in the whole earth!
For thy magnificence is elevated
Above the heavens
Out of the mouths of infants and of sucklings
Thou hast perfected praise
Because of thy enemies
That thou mayest destroy the enemy and the avenger.'
Psalm viii, 2–3.

He omitted the conclusion, but that they could add for themselves.

Indeed they understood. If the people held their peace, the stones would cry out ; if the priests and rulers were silent, infants and sucklings should speak ; if they rejected Him, the whole world would receive and proclaim Him. It was the refrain of the whole of this week, the last warning cry before the end, turned now from an appeal, such as we have heard often enough before, into a sad prophecy of rejection. They had already made their choice and were determined to stand by it ; the more He convinced them of error, so much the more did their hatred and their malice take fire.

Yet what could they do ? As the day wore on, not only the blind and the lame, not only the children gathered round Him, but the crowds that passed in and out went to Him, and listened to His winning words,

'Attentive to hear him
In admiration at his doctrine.'

In spite of His seeming anger, in spite of all His condemnation, to them He spoke as He had always spoken. He had compassion on the multitude ; they were as sheep without a shepherd ; though He had to blame them for their limited belief, yet could He say to Himself that it was not wholly their fault. In their simple, unsophisticated way they understood what He said better than the learned and the rulers. They listened because they wished to hear, they admired because what He said was eminently true, they were proud of Him, in their cramped way they loved Him, at least they could not fail to recognize how He loved them. Underneath all the story of these last days this stratum of loyal devotion must not be forgotten. It was so strong that Jesus could count upon it for His safety ; so strong that much as the priests and rulers longed to destroy Him, they feared the people more ; in the open day they did not dare to touch Him.

But in the evening it was different. At sunset, as on the day before, He would not delay in the city ; His hour though near was not yet come, and He would take the natural precautions. He would again retire to Bethania where He would be safe.

' And when evening was come
Leaving them
He went forth out of the city
Into Bethania
And remained there.'

CHAPTER XXXVI

109. The Fig-tree Withered

THE next morning betimes the little party was astir again. As the days followed one another they were becoming more confident. They had come back to Judæa in fear and trembling, and yet had determined to follow where He led. In Jericho He had been well received, in Bethania He had been more than welcomed; even here in Jerusalem every barrier had gone down before Him, the priests and the rulers themselves had ignored their own edicts for His capture. In Judæa, as once in Galilee, when He appeared the people were beginning to gather round Him ; as they protected Him there, so, nay more, were they His protection here. Let this only grow, and the Kingdom would come, they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Every day as they went with Him up to the city, the hearts of these simple Twelve grew in expectation.

On this third morning, as they passed up the hill behind Bethania, naturally their thoughts went back to the single event of the day before. Here He had said He was hungry ; there was the fig-tree from which, strangely, He had hoped to gather fruit. But what was this? As they looked at the fig-tree before them they saw that it was dead. The leaves were crumpled and dry, many had fallen to the ground ; the branches themselves were wrinkled, the bark was withered, without that fresh, round smoothness which the healthy fig-tree shows. It had withered from the roots in a single day, as if it had been poisoned. They wondered ; for the moment they did not remember the words that Jesus had said.

‘ And in the morning returning to the city
When they passed by
They saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots
And the disciples seeing it wondered saying
How is it presently withered away ? ’

But one among them remembered. It is some time now since we have heard of Simon Peter; not since the day across the Jordan when he had confidently said:

> ‘ Behold we have left all and followed thee
> What reward therefore shall we have ? ’

But he had not been unobservant; none watched the actions and listened to the words of Jesus more than Simon Peter, as we have had many occasions to notice. As he looked at the withered fig-tree the words of the Master uttered on the previous day came back to his mind.

> ‘ May no man hereafter eat fruit of thee
> Any more for ever.’

It had certainly been a curse, and yet it had been said so casually that he had scarcely noticed it; now, with the tree dead before him, Peter realized the power of those words. The Master seemed as if He would pass by, taking no notice of what had happened; Peter could not resist attracting His attention.

> ‘ And Peter remembering said to him
> Rabbi
> Behold the fig-tree which thou didst curse
> Is withered away.’

Jesus answered; but, as often, in a way that could scarcely have been expected. He had given them a living parable. Commentators in all time have dwelt upon the sign that was contained in the cursing of the fig-tree; as it had withered under His words, so would that tree wither which had received all His care in these last two years and had borne no fruit. A short time before He had spoken of the tree that the master had doomed, yet had been spared for a season at the request of the tiller of the soil. Now the time had come; the ground had been further tilled and yet the tree had borne only leaves; there had come an end to the waiting and the curse had fallen. The Twelve might not then understand, but afterwards they would; God would not be thwarted in His plan.

This He would let them discover for themselves. Meanwhile for them He would draw the lesson only of encouragement. They had feared the opposition of men; on more than one occasion they had dreaded what might come of His constant opposition to the Pharisees. By this sign, if they had eyes to see, they might understand that this opposition, and obstacles greater still, would all be removed if only they would trust Him. Was the tree withered at His word? Let them but believe, let them but trust, let them but put this faith and trust into prayer, and there was nothing that could not be removed from their path. He caught hold of a standard Jewish phrase; it was common to speak of hindrances as mountains in the way; when one had achieved something almost superhuman, it would be said that he had moved a mountain. In their language, then, He spoke; with Olivet rising up before Him between them and Jerusalem He said:

'Have the faith of God
Amen I say to you
Whosoever shall have faith
And stagger not in his heart
But believe that whatsoever he saith shall be done
It shall be done to him
Not only this of the fig-tree shall you do
But also if you shall say to this mountain
Take up
And cast thyself into the sea
It shall be done.'

Then He pressed His teaching home. All this they should do, and the means by which they should do it would be prayer; prayer, true prayer, would win everything.

'Therefore I say unto you
All things
Whatsoever you ask when ye pray
Believe that you shall receive
And they shall come unto you.'

But that prayer must be from a true heart; and a heart can only be true that is full of forgiveness.

'And when you shall stand to pray
Forgive if you have aught against any man
That your Father also
Who is in heaven
May forgive you your sins.'

This is not the first time we have heard these words. They are given here by S. Mark; long ago S. Matthew had given them in his record of the Sermon on the Mount;

and whether they were spoken then, or now, or at both times, there can be no doubt, from constant repetitions in many places, that the Twelve had learnt this first lesson regarding prayer. Without the spirit of forgiveness there is none.

Thus, in the early morning of this His last day before the world, Jesus gives to His Twelve a final lesson on the two things which He would have them ever remember; and these two things He will repeat to them, again and again, in all that is to follow. On the one hand, the end has come for those who have rejected Him; on the other, those who have received Him, and put faith in Him, shall find that they will conquer. On the one hand, hypocrisy shall be revealed and shall perish; on the other, true faith, which is expressed in confidence, shall live through everything. And confidence will express itself in prayer; prayer that believes, prayer that trusts, prayer that is steeped in love, in love of Himself, and in love of one's fellow-men, that love which is of infinite forgiveness. As the day goes on He will emphasize the first in terrible and emphatic terms, yet will He never lose sight of the second; when the day is over, and He leads them to Calvary, He will dwell more on the second, by appeal, by example, by proof of His own unfathomable forgiveness.

110. The Last Day in the Temple

(1) *The Authority of John the Baptist*

Again they came across the valley and passed into the Temple through the Golden Gate; during all these three days Jesus used the Temple as if it were His very own. He resumed His work where yesterday He had left it. He walked where He would, He spoke as He would to the people, instructing them here, there giving them the good tidings; while He taught and preached there was none to prevent or contradict Him. It was a wonderful morning; never before, in all His visits to the Temple in past times, had He been so uninterrupted, so accepted; His followers could not but hope and expect that the promise of the Sunday preceding was every minute coming near to fulfilment.

But as He preached, and the people were eagerly attentive to Him, there were those hard by who watched Him.

‘And when he was walking in the temple
As he was teaching the people
And preaching the gospel
The chief priests and the scribes with the ancients
Met together.’

They could not lay hands on Him; so long as He chose to pass them by they could no longer interrupt Him. Their sneers and their insinuations, once of avail among the people, were now ignored. The miracles they could not deny, neither could they explain them away. Their last stronghold, that a prophet did not come from Galilee but from Jerusalem, was in danger of being overthrown by this new attitude that He had taken up.

Still that stronghold they must defend at all costs. If He claimed to come from the Temple, then at least He must show His title. On this point, if on no other, they could question Him, and seeing that they, and they alone, had the authority of the Temple in their hands, on this point they could surely refute Him. On other occasions they had challenged His right, and He had always evaded the question. On that same spot, two years before, they had said to him:

‘What sign dost thou shew unto us
Seeing thou dost these things?’

and the only answer He had given to them had been:

‘Destroy this temple
And in three days I will raise it up.’

More than once in Galilee and Decapolis their allies had asked Him for a sign, and the only response had been that

‘A wicked and adulterous generation
Asketh for a sign
And a sign shall not be given it
But the sign of Jonas the prophet.’

What was that? What could He mean? But this time they would go further. Even if there were signs sufficient, and there were Pharisees and doctors who thought so, still signs were not enough. Where was His authority to make use of them?

‘And they came and spoke to him saying
Tell us
By what authority dost thou these things

Or who is he
That hath given thee this authority
That thou shouldst do these things ?'

We cannot dwell too long on the infinite patience which Jesus showed to these men. At the same time it was not a weak patience ; it did not yield. They had their rights and He respected them. They were entitled to ask questions and He would give them a reply ; only when their questions were with malice would He turn them upon themselves.

They had had their answer long ago. Their constant demand was but a refusal to accept it ; if He gave it them again it could only, as before, lead to cries that He blasphemed. Yet they should have it in another way ; they should answer their question themselves. He would throw them back to the first time they had asked it, of the Baptist at the Jordan. Then they were right in making their enquiry ; but that right had implied a duty, and that duty they had not performed. If they had a right to question John, then for John's sake, and for the sake of the people who followed him, they should have given their decision. But that they had not done ; they had found no fault with him, yet had they given him a cold reception. They had heard him claim to fulfil the prophets, yet had they not confirmed his claim. They had seen without a doubt the truth of the signs which he gave them, yet had they gone their own way and left him alone. Instead, when Herod had imprisoned him they made no protest ; when at length John was put to death they said nothing ; if they did, it was only to imply that this collapse of John was proof enough that he was not from God.

Still this they would never have dared to say before the world ; John held too high a place in the esteem of men for that. It had been better for them to keep silence, to let the name and memory of John die, as had the name and memory of many a man who had dared to stand up against them. The strength of the ruling clique could crush any individual opposition. Besides its own compact and secret unity, it had behind it the blind devotion of a fanatic religious people ; and only if the latter broke away was their authority in any danger.

But precisely this was what they had most reason to fear from this daring and outspoken successor to John. The latter had called them

'Ye brood of vipers';

Jesus had gone further. He had called them

'A wicked and adulterous generation'.

Here in the very Temple court He had told them that they were no true sons of Abraham; that they were children, not of God, whom He claimed for His Father, but of the devil; that they were condemned by the Scriptures, by Moses; and the people had been expressly told to obey them when commanded, but

'According to their works
Do ye not.'

No; this Jesus needed careful handling. Precisely because He had impugned their authority they would question His right; and whatever He answered would be able to put Him in the wrong. They would be the aggressors; they would force Him to defend Himself; to have to defend oneself is always to appear at least to be in the wrong, and the appearance alone would tell against Him.

But this time they were not to be so humoured. On former occasions He had answered them, however mysterious His answers had been. To-day, His last day, He would turn the tables on them. By what authority did He act? Let them first decide on a point which they had hitherto evaded, and He would then give them His answer. They had examined John; he had submitted to that examination; yet to this day had they never passed sentence either of condemnation or of acquittal. Let them decide now openly on that; the rest would follow.

'And Jesus answering said to them
I also will ask you one word
Which if you will tell me
I will also tell you
By what authority I do these things.
The baptism of John
Whence was it?
Was it from heaven
Or from men
Answer me.'

Certainly, at such a time, before such an audience as was then gathered about them, a more awkward question could scarcely have been asked of these Scribes and Pharisees, these priests and ancients. For in the first place it was a fair question, just and reasonable; one which they had asked themselves, and which they had refused to answer, only because the answer in their hearts would not correspond with the answer they wished to utter. It was not that they did not know, or at least could not know if they so chose. It was that they would not; it was a biting example of that

'Leaven of the Pharisees
Which is hypocrisy',

of which He had spoken long ago.

But in the second place there was the multitude to be considered. It was a long-practised art with these leaders of the people to avoid awkward questions, above all to avoid coming to decisions which might involve inconvenience to themselves. The case of the Baptist had been such a case. Hitherto, by leaving the question open, they had been able to keep on good terms with John's followers, even while among themselves they would not own him. Now Jesus had suddenly put them on their mettle; one way or the other they must decide.

They turned away for a few moments, as if desirous to make sure that their response would be unanimous. They discussed the matter together. What was the truth and what was not troubled them very little; what really troubled them was the effect their words might have upon the people who stood about. At any cost, truth or no truth, they must not lose their hold on them.

'But they thought within themselves saying
If we shall say: From heaven
He will say
Why then did you not believe him?
But if we shall say, From men
We are afraid of the multitude
The whole people will stone us
For they are persuaded that John was a prophet
For all men counted John
That he was a prophet indeed.'

They did not dare to answer 'yes' or 'no'; at all costs they must still remain uncommitted. They turned back to Him,

'And they answering said to Jesus
We know not.'

To that reply there was only one retort; yet was it a retort which at once did honour to the memory of John, and gave those men, if they wished to have it, an answer to their question.

'And Jesus answering said to them
Neither do I tell you
By what authority I do these things.'

(2) *The Parable of the Two Sons*

But this time He did not turn away and leave them there as He had often done before on like occasions. After all this was their last opportunity, this was the last time He would be able to help them. To teach them was useless; to appeal to them as He had done of old was waste of words. All He could now do was to describe them to themselves, to let them see themselves as He saw them, in the hope that perchance some among them might yet be moved to repentance and be admitted to the Kingdom. He would resort to His old method, that of parables. Yet now they should not be by way of mystery, they should be so clear that anyone who heard them could see their application. Before they could turn away to devise some other scheme He caught them with His words:

'But what think you?
A certain man had two sons
And coming to the first he said
Son
Go work to-day in my vineyard
And he answering said
I will not
But afterwards being moved with repentance
He went
And coming to the other
He said in like manner
And he answering said
I go, Sir
And he went not
Which of the two did the father's will?
They say to him
The first.'

This time they were not able to answer :

‘ We know not.’

He had secured from them enough for His purpose. Let them again go back to John ; let them again consider their attitude towards him, both when he was alive and now. Let them think of those who went to John, the sinners who had ignored their God. Let them contrast those who made so much of their service and yet had contemned His messenger.

‘Jesus saith to them
Amen I say to you
That the publicans and the harlots
Shall go into the kingdom of God before you
For John came to you in the way of justice
And you did not believe him
But the publicans and the harlots believed him
But you seeing it
Did not even afterwards repent
That you might believe him.’

Thus at the end of the life of Jesus are we thrown back to that first scene in the Jordan valley, when the publicans and sinners came to John and asked :

‘ What shall we do ? ’

while the priests only came to ask :

‘ Who art thou ? ’

As John had been faithful to Jesus, so was Jesus faithful to John to the very end. As John had gladly yielded place to Jesus, so to the end did Jesus give to John the first place among His witnesses. To believe in John was to believe in Him ; to repent at the bidding of John was to enter the Kingdom, no matter how great a sinner one might be. If John had been permitted to perish, Jesus in His turn, in but a few days, would be His companion in death.

But the last sentence of this discourse betrays another feature in the character of Jesus, one which is strikingly reflected in the parable which He had just uttered. The first son had refused and then had repented ; the second had promised and then had disobeyed. Still there is no question here of punishment ; it is as if He still would hold out hope. These men before Him had refused ; even yet, if they would, there was hope for them.

‘ You seeing it
Did not even afterwards repent
That you might believe.’

Would they, perchance, even at this last hour, be wise and accept what was now only too evident ? They had said they did not know ; at the very least this was an acknowledgement that possibly the Baptist was right. He clung to that concession, He drove home the justice of John’s cause, He proved to them the good John had done to all the world around Him, He challenged them to bring one word against him, He showed them the injustice of their obstinacy, the sin that alone stood between them and the truth, He opened to them the door through which they might pass to faith.

‘ You did not repent
That you might believe ’,

is the same thing as to say :

‘ If you will repent
You will then believe.’

Truly in the midst of all the hardness of this day of conflict it is manifest how He longed even for such men as these. He was the friend, not only of publicans and harlots, but, if they would have Him, of ‘ scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ’. In all that is yet to follow, in all the denunciation, this may not be forgotten, for it adds a fresh colour to the agony of the heart from which it came.

(3) *The Labourers and the Master’s Son*

Then as if He would drive home the point which He had made, as if He would use to the full the advantage He had secured, scarcely had they time to recover from this pathetic appeal, disguised as it was in hard words, than He overwhelmed them with another parable. He played on a familiar theme. He had used it before, and many a prophet had made use of it ; scarcely had He begun than His hearers would have known by experience how to make its application.

‘ And he began to speak to them in parables : There was a certain man an householder who planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about it, and dug a place for the wine-vat, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And when the time of the fruits drew nigh he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that he might receive the fruits thereof. Who having laid hands on him, beat him and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant, and him they wounded in the head, and used him reproachfully, and sent away empty. And again he sent another, and him they killed. And many others, of whom some they beat, and others they killed. Then the lord of the vineyard, having yet one son most dear to him, also sent him unto them last of all, saying: What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. It may be when they see him they will reverence him. Whom when the husbandmen saw they thought within themselves, saying to one another: This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours. And laying hold on him they killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do to those husbandmen? They say to him: He will bring those evil men to an evil end, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen that shall render him the fruit in due season. Which they hearing said: God forbid. But he looking on them said: What is this then that is written? Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? By the Lord this has been done and it is wonderful in our eyes. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be bruised; and upon whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder. Therefore I say to you: That the kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof.'

This parable may be said to be the last great appeal of Jesus to the priests and elders, the Scribes and Pharisees. It is the summing up of His indictment, the collecting of all the evidence before the sentence is finally pronounced. For His theme He does not go far afield; as He has always done with others, so with these men He chooses an illustration which was familiar to them all. They were, or they claimed to be, familiar with the Scriptures; from the first the chosen people had been likened to a vineyard. Thus had the Psalmist spoken of the salvation out of Egypt:

'Thou hast brought a vineyard out of Egypt
Thou hast cast out the Gentiles
And planted it.'
Psalm lxxix, 9.

Isaias had described it in such terms that Jesus seemed to do no more than quote the prophet's words and amplify them :

'I will sing to my beloved the canticle of my cousin
Concerning his vineyard
My beloved had a vineyard on a hill
In a fruitful place
And he fenced it in
And planted it with the choicest vines
And built a tower in the midst thereof
And set up a winepress therein.'
Isaias v, 1, 2.

And he had concluded :

'For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
Is the house of Israel.'
Isaias v,.7.

Other prophets had maintained the same description. Jeremias :

'I planted thee a chosen vineyard
All true seed' ;
Jeremias ii, 21.

Ezechiel in threatening mood :

'As the vine tree among the trees of the forests
Which I have given to the fire to be consumed
So will I deliver up
The inhabitants of Jerusalem' ;
Ezechiel xv, 6.

Osee :

'Israel a vine full of branches
The fruit is agreeable to it.'
Osee x, 1.

This His vine the Lord had entrusted to His husbandmen ; to Moses and the Judges ; to the kings ; but most of all to the priests and Levites, the Scribes and the Pharisees, the lawyers and the ancients, the keepers of the Law and its interpreters. Since the day when the Law had come into their hands, it had been for them to administer it, to cultivate the vineyard of the Lord. And with what result had this been done? As before the eye of Jesus had looked across all space, so now it looked through all time. It went back to the warnings of Moses before he died, who feared so much lest his own might again one day hanker for the flesh-pots of Egypt. It looked to those first corruptions witnessed to in the Book of Judges, when the Canaanites were spared to the ruin of Israel, when idolatry spread throughout the land. It looked upon the days of the Kings, when again the people fell, led on by their rulers, and the prophets came, and appealed, and wept for Israel, and were ignored or persecuted or put to death.

'Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?
And they have slain them
Who foretold of the coming of the Just One.'
Acts vii, 52.

'They were stoned
They were cut asunder
They were tempted
They were put to death by the sword
They wandered about in sheepskins
In goatskins
Being in want distressed afflicted
Of whom the world was not worthy
Wandering in deserts
In mountains and in dens and in caves of the earth.'
Hebrews xi, 37, 38.

All through the ages the lament of the prophets had been the same; one long cry that the leaders of Israel would not hear them.

He looked at the destruction of Israel and Juda, the Captivity and the Restoration; and yet again what could He see but a further hardening of heart, a further concentration on themselves, a further building up of their own conception of the Messias that was to come? Thus they had gone on from generation to generation refusing to learn from those who were outside themselves, until to receive the herald of the Kingdom had become wellnigh impossible.

‘ This people honoureth me with their lips
But their heart is far from me
And in vain do they worship me
Teaching doctrines and commandments of men.’

Isaias xxix, 13.

And yet there had been the other side ; the patience and long-suffering of His Father. How He had borne with them! If the story of His chosen people had been one of continued infidelities, likewise had it been one of continued mercies.

‘ O the Lord
The Lord God
Merciful and gracious
Patient and of much compassion
And true
Who keepeth mercy unto thousands
Who takest away iniquity and wickedness and sin
And no man of himself is innocent before thee.’

Exodus xxxiv, 6–7.

‘ I am the Lord thy God
A jealous God
Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their children
Unto the third and fourth generation
To them that hate me
And shewing mercy unto many thousands
To them that love me
And keep my commandments.’

Deuteronomy v, 9, 10.

‘ For thus saith the Lord
As I have brought upon this people
All this great evil
So will I bring upon them
All the good I now speak to them.’

. . . .

‘ I will gather them together
Out of the lands to which I have cast them out
In my anger and in my wrath and in my indignation
And I will bring them again into this place
And will cause them to dwell securely
And they shall be my people
And I will be their God

And I will give them one heart and one way
That they may fear me all days
And that it may be well with them
And with their children after them
And I will make an everlasting covenant with them
And will not cease to do them good
And I will give my fear in their heart
That they may not revolt from me
And I will rejoice over them
When I shall do them good
And I will plant them in this land in truth
With my whole heart
And with my whole soul.'
Jeremias xxxii, 37–42.

With passages such as these their whole record rang; invitation, acceptance, rejection, punishment, repentance, reconciliation, restoration,—from the beginning the whole history of His Father's dealings with His own had been consistently the same, no matter how low they had sunk.

'Woe to the sinful nation
A people laden with iniquity
A wicked seed
Ungracious children
They have forsaken the Lord
They have blasphemed the Holy One of Israel
They are gone backwards

. . . .

Hear the word of the Lord
Ye rulers of Sodom
Give ear to the law of our God
Ye people of Gomorrha

. . . .

Your hands are full of blood
Wash yourselves: be clean
Take away the evil of your devices from my eyes
Cease to do perversely

. . . .

And then come and accuse me
Saith the Lord

If your sins be as scarlet
They shall be made as white as snow
If they be red as crimson
They shall be white as wool
If you be willing
And will hearken to me
You shall eat the good things of the land.'
Isaias i, 4–19.

Such a lord, in spite of all that these husbandmen have done to him and to his servants, does Jesus picture to these men in the parable. He is still the father who saw his son coming to him from a great way off :

'And running to him fell upon his neck
And kissed him ' ;

still the Lord who would respond to any sinner's cry :

'Lord, be merciful!'

and in describing the Father He describes Himself. In the midst of this day of cruel cunning on the part of His enemies, in the midst of the vehement denunciation, rising more and more as the day goes on, He has only the heart for forgiveness, if only they will be forgiven. After what He has said of the doings of these husbandmen, their insults, their murders, their contempt of their lord ; after we have been compelled to think of the wrath they have incurred, the pathos of the picture comes upon us almost with a shock :

'Then the lord of the vineyard
Having yet one son
Most dear to him
Also sent him unto them last of all
Saying : What shall I do ?
I will send my beloved son
It may be when they see him
They will reverence him.'

'It may be' ; it was by no means sure. The lord will risk the life of his own son that he might find some means of reconciliation with these hired men.

In this way, on this note, does Jesus swing the story from the past into the present, and from the present into the future. In four days more all will be over. Vividly for the last time He puts before them the folly as well as the iniquity of the deed they contemplate; could patience, endurance, love itself, go further?

'Whom when the husbandmen saw
They thought within themselves
Saying one to another
This is the heir
Come let us kill him
And the inheritance shall be ours
And laying hold on him
They killed him
And cast him out of the vineyard.'

And now once more we see the overwhelming irony which would at times appear in His dealings with His enemies. The tale they would understand; the justice of retribution on those husbandmen they would not deny; but the application to themselves in their blindness of heart they would fail to recognize. Instead they would look about them. They would see the vineyard of the Lord, the Jewish people, worked by a race of foreign husbandmen, Pontius Pilate and his Romans. They would rejoice to think that thus cleverly this Jesus of Nazareth had proved the injustice of the Roman tyranny. While they so interpret His words in their hearts He turns to them and asks:

'When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come
What will he do to those husbandmen?'

and at once they answer:

'He will bring those men to an evil end
And will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen
That they shall render him the fruit in due season.'

Jesus stood and looked at them; they had pronounced their own condemnation. Like Esther with Aman, like Nathan before David, He had only now to say:

'Thou art the man!'

For a moment He paused. Then pointing to them, with that steadiness of countenance which they had seen so often, and which needed no further argument, He repeated what they had said:

'He will come
And will destroy those husbandmen
And will give the vineyard to others.'

At once it dawned upon them what they had done. It was not the Romans but themselves that were guilty; not the Romans but themselves were destined to be rejected. Before they could recover from their stupor they cried:

'God forbid!'

They would reverse their decision, but it was too late.

Again, as before, He would urge His point. It was the final contest; what followed would be but feeble bickering; He would leave them in no doubt about His claim. They had themselves opened the discussion; they had ventured to ask Him for His credentials, a just request enough had it been honest; He had answered them by referring them to that other day, when they had asked the same question of John and had not dealt honestly with his reply; let them be just to John, and they would soon know the answer to their question of Himself. Then He had driven the matter further home. He had put before them the whole course of evil which had brought them to this pass; He had compelled them all unwittingly to condemn themselves. At once He threw them back upon their own ground; if they read aright they would see for themselves that in rejecting Him they were but fulfilling the prophets.

'But he looking on them said
What is this then that is written
Have you never read in the Scriptures
The stone which the builders rejected
The same is become the head of the corner
By the Lord this has been done
And it is wonderful in our eyes.'

Then with that power of imagery peculiar to Himself He threw this into another parable:

'Whosoever shall fall upon that stone
Shall be bruised
And upon whomsoever it shall fall
It shall grind him to powder.'

As before He had expanded the parable of Isaias, so now

He expanded the words of the Psalmist ; as by one He proved the fulfilment of a prophecy, so now He would seem to be reminding them of another.

‘ Wherefore hear the word of the Lord
Ye scornful men
Who rule over my people that is in Jerusalem
For you have said
We have entered into a league with death
And we have made covenant with hell
When the overflowing scourge shall pass through
It shall not come upon us
For we have placed our hope in lies
And by falsehood we are protected
Therefore thus saith the Lord God
I will lay a stone in the foundations of Sion
A tried stone
A corner stone
Founded in the foundation
He that believeth
Let him not hasten
And I will set judgement in weight
And justice in measure
And hail shall overturn the hope of falsehood
And waters shall overflow its protection
And your league with death shall be abolished
And your covenant with hell shall not stand
When the overflowing scourge shall pass
You shall be trodden under it.’

Isaias xxviii, 14–18.

Finally, more definitely than ever before, that there might be no doubt whatsoever of the application of His words, He concluded :

‘ Therefore I say to you
That the kingdom of God shall be taken from you
And shall be given to a nation
Yielding the fruits thereof.’

Thus did Jesus conclude His answer to their question by what authority He did these things. The Twelve were standing by ; on them the scene made a lasting impression. Not many months after, when Jesus was gone and they had begun to do their work, when Peter had healed a lame man and they had been put in prison, they were asked this same question by these same men, and they gave this same answer.

'And it came to pass on the morrow that their princes and ancients and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem, and Annas the high priest, and Caiphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest. And setting them in the midst they asked: By what power or by what name have you done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said to them: Ye princes of the people and ancients, hear; if we this day are examined concerning the good deed done to the infirm man, by what means he hath been made whole, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead; even by him this man standeth here before you whole. This is the stone that was rejected by you the builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to man whereby we must be saved' (Acts iv, 5–12).

So Peter spoke to them; later when writing to his flock he revives the memory:

'Unto whom coming
As to a living stone
Rejected indeed by men
But chosen and made honourable by God
Be you also as living stones
Built up, a spiritual house
A holy priesthood
To offer up spiritual sacrifices
Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ
Therefore it is said in the scripture
Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone
Elect precious
And he that shall believe in him
Shall not be confounded
To you therefore that believe
He is honour
But to them that believe not
The stone which the builders rejected
The same is made the head of the corner

And a stone of stumbling and a rock of scandal
To them who stumble at the word
Neither do believe
Whereunto also they are set.'
1 Peter ii, 4–8.

Later again S. Paul uses the same argument :

'But Israel
By following after the law of justice
Is not come unto the law of justice
Why so ?
Because they sought it not by faith
But as it were of works
For they stumbled at the stumbling-stone
As it is written
Behold I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone
And a rock of scandal
And whosoever believeth in him
Shall not be confounded.'
Romans ix, 31–33.

And again, with exquisite beauty, to his beloved Ephesians :

'Now therefore
You are no more strangers and foreigners
But you are fellow-citizens with the saints
And the domestics of God
Built upon the foundation
Of the apostles and prophets
Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone
In whom all the building
Being framed together
Groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord
In whom you also are built together
Into an habitation of God
In the Spirit.'
Ephesians ii, 19–22.

Much more might be said upon this wonderful conclusion—for so in spite of what follows it might be called—of His contest with the priests and elders. On that same spot, thirty-three years ago, an old man had received Him as a child into His arms and said :

'Now thou dost dismiss thy servant
O Lord
According to thy word
In peace
Because my eyes have seen thy salvation
Which thou hast prepared
Before the face of all peoples
A light to the revelation of the Gentiles
And the glory of thy people Israel.'

Yet had he added :

'Behold this child is set
For the fall and for the resurrection
Of many in Israel
And for a sign which shall be contradicted.'
Luke ii, 29–34.

Now on these same Temple steps the prophecy was definitely fulfilled. As the interview went on, the priests and the Pharisees and the elders knew beyond a doubt to whom He referred. Before, on this spot, He had complained that they rejected Him ; now He rejected them. It was a definite claim ; they told one another that it was a usurpation. More than ever must He be arrested ; now as never before He had openly defied all authority but His own.

'And when the chief priests and Pharisees and the scribes
Had heard these parables
They knew that he spoke of them
And seeking to lay hands on him
They feared the multitude
Because they held him as a prophet
And leaving him
They went their way.'

They looked into the faces of the crowd around them. Wherever their friends were, these at least were people not to be defied. They believed in John the Baptist ; they believed in this Man as John's successor. For months past the number of His adherents had been growing, even here in the Holy City, and the pilgrims to the feast had increased the total. Besides this was no season for disturbance. They could bide their time. They turned about ; they left Him ; definitely they deserted Him and went their way. It was the final choice of the leaders of Israel. In an hour or two more Jesus will show how that rejection broke His heart. For the moment He restrained Himself, He had yet other work to do.

(4) *The Parable of the Wedding Feast*

The leaders were gone, but there yet remained the people about Him, more than ever

'Like sheep without a shepherd',

and therefore more than ever moving His compassion. During these three days they had been wonderfully faithful to Him. There had not even been among them that forming into parties, and that wrangling among themselves, which had been so conspicuous when He had come up at the Feast of Tabernacles. There was no attempt, as there had been then, to stone Him; if the allies of the priests were about, it was evident that they had no wish to make themselves troublesome. So much nearer, might it have seemed to the Twelve, had He come to the founding of His Kingdom. Surely now the moment was propitious and imminent.

Jesus humoured them. Hitherto He had spoken words of condemnation; now He would alter His tone. The priests and the Pharisees were gone; He would let these simple people see that the condemnation was not meant for them. He would repeat all He had said; He would alter nothing, and yet would He add something which would give these humble folk hope and consolation. His friends were full of the thought of the King and the Kingdom; then that should be His theme. When the priests had gone He looked around at them all. His face was now quite different; as they stood about in silence waiting for Him to resume where He had left off when His enemies had interrupted Him, then—

'Jesus answering spoke again in parables to them saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king who made a marriage for his son. And he sent his servants to call them that were invited to the marriage; and they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying: Tell them that were invited: Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come ye to the marriage. But they neglected and went their ways; one to his farm, and another to his merchandise.

And the rest laid hands on his servants, and having treated them contumeliously, put them to death. But when the king had heard of it he was angry; and sending his armies he destroyed those murderers and burnt their city. And he saith to his servants: The marriage indeed is ready, but they that were invited were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find call to the marriage. And his servants going forth into the ways gathered together all that they found, both bad and good; and the marriage was filled with guests.'

Very like this had He spoken a few months before. It was down in the lower part of Judæa, whither He had gone after the feast of Encænia. There on a Sabbath day He had been invited to dine with a Pharisee; while He was in the house a dropsical man had been brought in and He had healed him. He had defended Himself for healing on the Sabbath, and this time none had contradicted Him. Then He had gone further; He had given them the clearest lesson He had ever yet given of His idea of charity:

'When thou makest a supper
Call not thy friends nor thy brethren
Nor thy kinsmen nor thy neighbours who are rich
Lest perhaps they also invite thee again
And a recompense be made to thee
But when thou makest a feast
Call the poor the maimed the lame and the blind
And thou shalt be blessed
Because they have not
Wherewith to make thee recompense
For recompense shall be made thee
At the resurrection of the just.'

This teaching He had followed up with a parable, of a king who made a supper, and invited his 'neighbours who were rich' and they would not come, and finally invited in their place

'The poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind.'

It was, and still is, a difficult parable. It would seem to have been given mainly to a company of Pharisees and their friends. It was given, not at a time or on an occasion of conflict, but when the surroundings were peaceful; when one of the guests at the table had blessed Him for His words. If there was warning in the lesson of the parable, it was no less true that its main theme taught that the service of

‘ The poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind ’

was an imitation of the King of the Kingdom of heaven.

Now under very different circumstances Jesus takes up the same subject. In the first scene, down in Judæa, He has the Pharisees before Him ; in the second He has none for they have just left Him. In the first scene, at a banquet in a Pharisee’s house, the common people are excluded ; in the second the common people are His only audience. The first occasion is one of comparative peace, the second comes after the final rejection by the Pharisees of Him, by Him of the Pharisees. In the first case the Pharisees are well-disposed and are as yet not afraid to say so, while of the people He is less sure ; in the second not a Pharisee dared lift a voice on His behalf while the people He addresses

‘ All held him to be a prophet.’

Clearly, then, He will have in view a different use for the parable. There is less of detail in what He has to say ; the invitation of the king is more developed and appealing. He but alludes to the excuses of those who refused :

‘ One to his farm
Another to his merchandise ’ ;

He repeats what He has said in the former immediate parables

‘ And the rest laid hands on his servants
And having treated them contumeliously
Put them to death.’

This is an addition to the former story. It marks the transition to the new surroundings, the lesson of rejection and all its consequences. In the former parable the king took no further thought of those who refused his invitation ; the main purpose of Jesus was to show why

‘ The poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind ’

were at the king’s table in preference to others. But now He must go further. Then the great ones in the land had merely excused themselves and the king had passed them by ; now they had done more. They had not shown him even the deference of an excuse, they had deliberately ignored him :

‘ They would not come
They neglected and went their ways
The rest laid hands on his servants
And having treated them contumeliously
Put them to death.’

Now indeed it was a different tale. It had begun to take on something of the story they had heard that morning spoken to the priests and elders, of the husbandmen who had put to death the servants of the Lord of the vineyard. And what is there threatened is now an accomplished fact. There we are told that when the lord of the vineyard shall come

‘ He will bring those evil men to an evil end
And will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen
That shall render him the fruit in due season ’ ;

now :

‘ When the king had heard of it
He was angry
And sending his armies
He destroyed those murderers
And burnt their city.’

But a few moments before they themselves heard the doom pronounced ; now He speaks of that doom as already fulfilled. How many of them linked up with this the words that had broken from Him on the Sunday preceding :

‘ If thou also hadst known
And that in this thy day
The things that are to thy peace
But now they are hidden from thy eyes
For the days shall come upon thee
And thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee
And compass thee round
And straiten thee on every side
And beat thee flat to the ground
And thy children who are in thee
And they shall not leave in thee
A stone upon a stone ’ ?

It would seem not many ; as the prophecies of the coming Passion had seemed to the Twelve impossible, so were these prophecies of the destruction of the Holy City. Before the day was over He would be yet more explicit.

Then follows the new development. On that very spot, some six months ago, men had heard Him cry :

‘ If any man thirst
Let him come to me and drink.’

Down the road a little later they had listened to Him :

‘ Come to me
All you that labour and are burthened
And I will refresh you.’

That very morning He had repeated what often enough He had hinted at before :

‘ Amen I say to you
That the publicans and harlots
Shall go into the kingdom of God
Before you.’

Now all this is included in the story ; the great ones are rejected, the least are welcomed, not only

‘ The poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind ’,

but

‘ The good and bad ’ ;

the common people like themselves, be they who they might.

‘ And he saith to his servants
The marriage indeed is ready
But they that were invited were not worthy
Go ye therefore into the highways
And as many as ye shall find
Call to the marriage
And his servants going forth into the ways
Gathered together all that they found
Both bad and good
And the marriage was filled with guests.’

We listen to Jesus as He speaks, seeking for Himself some consolation in the midst of this time of rejection. It is the same Jesus always, yearning for the best, disappointed, finding solace in whatever men may give Him, giving back to them a return full measure and flowing over. It is the Jesus whom the beloved disciple could never dismiss from his thoughts :

‘ He came unto his own
And his own received him not

But as many as received him
He gave them power to become sons of God
To them that believe in his name.'

So He gave these people hope, and reward for their hitherto fidelity, while to Himself He gave at this fatal moment the comfort of their company. It was the last time He would speak to them, whether in parables or otherwise. He had welcomed them to His marriage banquet; He could not but add a word of warning. For with all His tender affection for them He knew them. He knew their minds, He knew the effect of the training they had received, He had summed it up already in a word when He had said:

'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees
Which is hypocrisy.'

This chosen people, to whom all others were anathema; these children of Abraham, secure in their inheritance; these followers of Moses and the prophets, to whom form had become more than life; these adorers in the Temple, to whom ceremonial was a proof of righteousness,—was there not danger that when at length they were received at His banquet they might bring with them these same ideas? They might ignore the warning of the prophets of old; they might forget the threats of the Baptist:

'Whose fan is in his hand
And he will thoroughly cleanse his floor
And gather his wheat into the barn
And the chaff he will burn
With unquenchable fire.'

They must be reminded, even at this eleventh hour, that membership alone in the Kingdom would not suffice for salvation. On other occasions, often enough, in season and out of season, He had warned them of the need of truth of life; now He would repeat it, in an emphatic picture, more severe perhaps than anything He had yet drawn, that by this means they might never forget it. Thus He continued His parable:

'And the king went in to see the guests
And he saw there a man
Who had not on a wedding garment
And he said to him: Friend

How camest thou in hither
Not having on a wedding garment?
And he was silent
Then the king said to the waiters
Bind his hands and feet
And cast him into the exterior darkness
There shall be weeping
And gnashing of teeth
For many are called
But few are chosen.'

It was indeed a sad note on which to end. Yet what could He do? In three days more at that very moment, over the wall there to the north, men would be howling for His blood, perhaps some of these very men who were now standing round Him. He would still love them to the end, He would still have mercy on them; when He was gone, and His Twelve had been given courage to carry on His work, they would come to this spot and remind these men of Him whom they had put to death, and many would repent and rejoin Him. But between then and now was a thick cloud, of the Rejection, and Death, and Burial. They would yet be saved, some of them,

'Yet so as by fire';

but for the moment the heart of Jesus was sore, and He had to end on a note of warning.

(5) *The Question of the Tribute*

The day was advancing. Already Jesus had done much. He had moved through the Temple court as if He were its Master. The priests had come to Him; they had questioned His authority; and they had gone away chagrined and humbled as they had never been before. Not only had their decrees been ignored; now there was no longer, as there had been formerly, a party in the crowd strong enough to take their side. They were being dislodged from their seats; worthless and ignorant Galilæans were threatening to rule in their stead; and because of the mind of the people they were able to do nothing. At any rate one thing was certain; for the moment it was hopeless to subdue Him by any authority of their own. It was clear other means must be tried; if in some way He could be brought into collision with secular authorities something might be done , let them make the attempt.

Thus though the enemy had gone away discomfited they had not given up the fight. It was war to the death and they knew it ; either He or they must perish. They had lost their hold of the people ; they could not even stir up the crowd, so that perchance the Romans might be induced to come and shoot them down from the tower of Antonia. Their only hope was to side with the popular feeling, to affect a conversion to the people's side, and if possible, when He was off His guard, to wring from Him something that would incriminate Him in the eyes of the Roman Governor. Then, perhaps, He would be removed by one more powerful than themselves ; that done, they would soon be able to reduce the populace to order. They met together ; they called in as their allies the Herodians, who had been instrumental in doing John the Baptist to death. If their scheme with Pontius Pilate failed, for he was arbitrary and contemptuous, still with Herod they might succeed, for Herod was capricious, and his hands were already stained with blood, and it was known that he feared this Jesus, for all that He was his subject.

'Then the Pharisees going
Consulted among themselves
How to ensnare him in his speech
And being upon the watch
They sent spies
Some of the Pharisees and of the Herodians
Who should feign themselves just
That they might take hold of him in his words
That they might deliver him up
To the authority and power of the governor.'

Their plans were carefully laid ; their spies carefully chosen ; the subject on which they would question Him carefully thought out. Once on a time in Capharnaum it was remembered that He had shown Himself independent of paying the tax for the upkeep of the Temple ; how much more independent must He claim to be of the tribute to the Roman authority! Then He had said :

'The children are free' ;

much more might it be supposed that He would attest the children's freedom now. Their emissaries were despatched; they mingled with the crowd; they worked their way through the ranks till they came to the steps where Jesus stood. Among them all they hoped He would not recognize some who had been before Him that day. It was true there was that about them which would betray them as belonging to the Pharisees and the Herodians, but that they could easily get over. They could feign to be converted, they could flatter Him on the very point which He had always asserted of Himself, His utter sincerity, His fearlessness of any man, His proclaiming of the truth He had been given to proclaim whether men took it or not. Had He not said, on this very spot, last year at the Feast of Tabernacles:

'If I say the truth
You believe me not
Which of you shall convince me of sin?
If I say the truth to you
Why do you not believe me?
He that is of God
Heareth the word of God'?

Had He not proclaimed Himself the Light, the Door of the fold, the Good Shepherd? And had He not in the same voice proclaimed their masters children of the devil? On that ground then they would take Him.

At a pause in the instruction these men made signs that they wished to speak. They affected to be struck by what He said; they were almost convinced; only here and now there was a practical difficulty in their minds which they would fain have solved. The kingdom was about to be founded; but for the moment they, the children of Abraham, were subject to the Roman yoke. Now in the book of Moses it was written:

'Thou mayst not make a man of another nation king
Who is not thy brother.'
Deuteronomy xvii, 15.

On that account their masters had protested to Him:

'We are the children of Abraham
And we have never been slaves to any man
How then sayst thou
You shall be free?'

Surely when He had told them that they were not free He had meant that they were subject to Cæsar. And their subjection was marked by one thing, one might say by one thing only; by the odious taxes Cæsar imposed upon them. Therefore they were in a dilemma. As children of Abraham, was it right of them to pay those taxes? As dutiful observers of the Law of Moses, should they not resist? As free men, with the freedom with which Jesus would have them to be free, was it not their duty, like the Machabees before them, to die rather than submit? This was surely a logical conclusion of all He had taught them; what did He recommend?

'Who coming to him say to him
Master
We know that thou art a true speaker
That thou speakest and teachest rightly
And carest not for any man
For thou regardest not the person of men
But teachest the way of God in truth
Tell us therefore
What dost thou think?
Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Cæsar
Or shall we not give it?'

Hitherto we have had no instance in the life of Jesus of His coming in conflict with the Roman power. In obedience to its authority it had come about that He had been born in Bethlehem. In Capharnaum He had healed a Roman soldier's servant, and had spoken glowingly of his faith. The Ruler in Capharnaum whose son He healed may have been a Roman, but beyond these there had been little notice taken of them. Though He had lived and worked so long round about the Roman city, Tiberias, and though the nature of the country would make it seem easier to reach Capharnaum from the south through Tiberias than by any other route, yet there is no record that He ever once set foot in that town. In His anxiety to attend to 'the lost sheep of the children of Israel' it would almost seem that He had carefully avoided all contact with the Roman people. Herod He had defied; He had openly condemned him; but of Cæsar and the Roman eagles He had said nothing. Still, if He had said what He had said of Herod, fearing not his power, defying his traps, and that in Herod's own domain, might it not be supposed that He would be equally defiant of Cæsar? If He could be induced to say of Cæsar what He had said of Herod, that alone would be enough for their purpose.

Jesus knew their wickedness, yet He would not condemn them. He read the deceitfulness in their words and in their hearts, yet He was willing to parley with them. We wonder again, as we have so often wondered before, at the infinite patience with which He continued to deal with creatures such as these. That He should yield to weakness we can understand; that He should win sinners by His bending to them we can recognize as His beautiful characteristic. But that He should so deal with malice, with the deliberate desire to deceive Him, with a determination now fixed never under whatever circumstances to be won by Him, that He should listen to this, and respond to this, and allow it to go unmolested, this is an extreme that is beyond human nature to anticipate, seen to be the triumph of charity only because He did it. He lets even men like these speak to Him; He gives them a sufficient answer; we can only wonder the more, saying with the men at Bethania:

'Behold how he loved.'

Nevertheless He would not let them leave Him under the impression that He had been deceived. By His answer to their conundrum He would evade their trick set to catch Him, but He would do more; He would let them see that He had read them through and through. He would call them and their wiles by their true names.

'But Jesus knowing their wickedness
Considering their guile
Said to them
Why do you tempt me
You hypocrites?
Shew me the coin of the tribute
Bring me a penny
That I may see it
And they offered him a penny.'

Thus have we come to the first and only time in the life of Jesus when we are actually shown Him with money in His hand. It was not His own; it was lent to Him by one of the crowd; from the fact that He had to ask for it may be inferred that He had none of His own. Indeed this was certain; what money they needed was in the hands of the keeper of the purse, and he, at this moment, what was he thinking?

They offered Him a 'penny'; the little silver coin known as the denarius, corresponding perhaps in value to our shilling. On one side was stamped the head of the emperor, Cæsar Tiberius, with his name and title, on the other the figure of a goddess. Jesus took the coin; He turned it over in His hand; this little thing, with its images upon it, images abhorred alike by observers of the Law and by patriotic children of Abraham,—what a tale of degradation it told! Contempt for their religious sentiment, contempt for them as a people. But He kept these thoughts to Himself; in His usual manner when He dealt with His enemies, He would refute them out of their own mouths. He looked at the effigy on the coin; He looked up at them.

'And Jesus saith to them
Whose image and inscription is this?'

Scarcely had He spoken than they knew what answer He would make. By a single breath their cleverness was reduced to nothing. Still must they answer.

'They answering said to him
Cæsar's.'

Jesus gave back the coin to its owner; His answer was scarcely necessary now. If these men used the coinage of Cæsar, then did they recognize Cæsar's dominion; if they recognized his dominion, then they accepted his taxation. Was it lawful? They had confused the meaning, as they confused it in so many ways. There was the law of God, and there was the law of man; different but not conflicting, for the one included and protected the other.

'Seek first the kingdom of God
And his justice
And all other things will be added unto you.'

Seek first the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the earth would be secure.

'And Jesus answering said to them
Render therefore to Cæsar
The things that are Cæsar's
And to God
The things that are God's.'

The answer was short and sure ; it left them without a further word to say. The discussion they had hoped to raise was already ended ; in all He had said there was not a phrase which, even out of its context, they could use against Him.

‘ And hearing this they marvelled at him
And could not reprehend his word
Before the people
And wondering at his answer
They held their peace
And leaving him
Went their way.’

This was not the first time that the emissaries of the Pharisees had recoiled before His simple word. As the answer is put before us in the printed page it may seem simple and obvious enough ; as every word of genius is simple when once it has been uttered. But it is not the one occasion only that must be remembered ; it is the constant repetition of attacks, sometimes open accusation, sometimes, as here, subtle flattery, sometimes false interpretation of His own words, sometimes deliberate questions to catch Him ; all these urged with a finesse, trained in schools of hairsplitting, and diplomacy, and special pleading, and half-truth, and self-justification, and prejudice, such as had no equal in the history of man. And every time it was beaten back by a single word, a single counter-question ; never a refusal, never a loss of ground either by excessive wrath or by weak surrender. It is this constant, equal, imperturbable, even-balanced temper which strikes us. For no man of those who wrote the Gospels could ever have invented such things, nor could any man have spoken like this but He who was utterly true and had only the very truth to teach. The words have stood the test of ages ; had they been merely clever repartees they would have long since worn themselves out and become hackneyed phrases. They ring with the same unanswerable simplicity to-day as when the Pharisees and their satellites first heard them. This is more than natural.

(6) *The Question from the Sadducees*

We have already during this study come in contact with the Sadducees, but never before have we found them alone.

At the beginning they had gone down with the Pharisees to take cognizance of John the Baptist, and by him had been denounced as :

'Ye brood of vipers.'

After the Galilæan preaching was over, and Jesus had gone far away into the outlying country, He had been met by the Sadducees, again in company with Pharisees, on the south shore of the lake, and had been asked by them for a sign. Then He had called them

'A wicked and adulterous generation.'

That day, when He had left them, He had told His Twelve to

'Beware of the leaven
Of the Pharisees and Sadducees' ;

and on another day later He had called this leaven 'hypocrisy'. But on this eventful day we find them apart. The Pharisees have made their attempt upon the Master, the Sadducees now make theirs ; on an altogether different plane, with an altogether different object, contempt rather than subtlety ruling their method, they now approach this self-appointed teacher in Israel.

So far as rationalism had a place among the Jews, it was represented by the Sadducees. They held by the Law of Moses, but they did not hold by its traditional interpretation. That there was another life they were willing in some way to allow ; but that it was a life of rewards and punishments, that the body would one day rise again and take part in that life, such doctrines they looked on as mere accretions, contrary to reason, contrary to the simple teaching of the Law. And their method of argument was mainly one of ridicule. They would invent situations which would seem to make the common doctrine merely absurd ; with a little cleverness, with a little imagination, so-called reason, keeping to its own horizon, can often find cause to disbelieve what is obviously beyond itself to understand.

These men, during these last three days, had not been unobservant of what had been passing in the Temple court. They had noticed the discomfiture of their rivals the Pharisees ; rivals in everything except as against a common enemy. In this last encounter in particular they had signally failed. And the reason was clear ; they had tried to draw the Nazarene into politics, and the Nazarene was not to be drawn. They would try another device; they would take Him on His own ground; they would give Him a problem which had always been to them insoluble, and which on the face of it tended to vulgar laughter. Should He give a solution they could urge their point, and turn His solution into an absurdity; should He give none, and it was likely that He would give none, even then their very question would only make Him seem ridiculous.

But they must proceed with caution. He knew them; He had already called them 'a wicked and adulterous generation'; He had called the men who had preceded them 'hypocrites' to their faces. They must treat Him with deference, but they must not cringe before Him. They must act as men of reason dealing with a problem. They must quote their text and propose their difficulty upon it, as pupils asking a master. In this spirit, then, they came to Him.

'That day there came to him the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection. And they asked him saying: Master, Moses wrote unto us: If a man's brother die, having a wife, and he leave no children, that his brother should take her to wife and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren; and the first, having married a wife, died; and not having issue left his wife to his brother; and the second took her and died, and neither did he leave any issue; and the third in like manner. And the seven all took her in like manner, and did not leave issue. And last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, when they shall rise again, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife.'

'When brethren dwell together, and one of them dieth without children, the wife of the deceased shall not marry to another, but his brother shall take her, and raise up seed for his brother. And the first son he shall have of her he shall call by his name; that his name be not abolished out of Israel. But if he will not take his brother's wife, who by law belongs to him, the woman shall go to the gate of the city, and call upon the ancients, and say: My husband's brother refuseth to raise up his brother's name in Israel, and will not take me to wife. And they shall cause him to be sent for forthwith, and shall ask him. If he answer, I will not take her to wife, the woman shall come to him before the ancients, and shall take off his shoe from his foot, and spit in his face, and say: So shall it be done to the man that will not build up his brother's house; and his name shall be called in Israel the house of the unshod' (Deuteronomy xxv, 5–10).

Yes, these men had indeed quoted Moses in the Law correctly. It was a sacred decree; it was consistent with so much in the whole of the Old Dispensation; that desire to preserve the tribe, and the family, and the inheritance within the family, which had done so much to keep together the children of Israel and to preserve their traditions. This at least He would accept; in this they were true sons of Moses.

But in the fable they narrated they could not suppress the contempt that worked in them. It was indeed a very different kind of parable, in subject, in tone, and in teaching, from anything the people had listened to coming from His lips. There was mockery in the whole story. Though two brethren would have served their purpose, though the example used by Moses himself would have sufficed, yet must they prolong the illustration from two brethren to seven, thereby making their question, not more difficult to solve, but more provocative of laughter. If even before He spoke they could raise ridicule against Him, it would be a great step gained.

But Jesus had patience with them; even with men of this calibre, this

> 'Wicked and adulterous generation',

He had patience. On this last day His endurance was not to be exhausted. He would not even treat them as severely as He had treated them in former days; though scorn had been His portion from them, more even than from the priests and Pharisees, who hated Him rather than scorned Him, yet He would not scorn them in return; though in the next few days they with their leaders, more than any others, would be the authors of His death, yet to-day would He deal with them as honest men. He would answer their questions, He would go further and discuss with them their own peculiar beliefs. He would treat with them on their own ground, draw them along from their own premisses, as if He had no grievance against them.

> 'And Jesus answering said to them
> Do ye not therefore err
> Because ye know not the scriptures

Nor the power of God?
The children of this world marry
And are given in marriage
But they that shall be accounted worthy of that world
And of the resurrection from the dead
Shall neither be married
Nor take wives
But shall be as the angels of God in heaven
Neither can they die any more
But they are equal to the angels
And are children of God
Being the children of the resurrection.'

One cannot but be struck with the mildness of this answer as compared with that just given to the emissaries of the Pharisees. To them He had said:

'Why do you tempt me
You hypocrites?'

To the Sadducees there is nothing of the kind; they are just told that they have made a mistake, and reasons are given to explain the source of their error.

'Do ye not therefore err
Because ye know not the scriptures
Nor the power of God?'

One seems to hear in this an anticipation of that later cry:

'Father, forgive them
For they know not what they do.'

Nor is that the only contrast. Twice that morning He had been in conflict with the Pharisees and their allies. Twice they had questioned Him with a view to catch Him; on neither occasion had He given them a plain answer. On the first occasion He confounded them by setting them a counter-question; on the second He gave them the means to solve their problems for themselves; in neither case did He speak plainly. Not so with the Sadducees; with them He is quite plain; never before has He spoken so clearly and simply of the life of man in the world to come. Not only that; not only does He answer their objection, He goes forward and deals with them on subjects peculiar to themselves. About the angels they had their own theories. They denied the resurrection of the body; reward and punishment did not enter their idea of a future life; there were some who were doubtful, even to disbelief, about the existence of a future life at all.

Jesus knew all this, and had compassion on it; compassion, it would seem, more than that indignation and scorn which He had shown to His former questioners. From the question which they had asked and its solution He went on to speak with them of the angels and the angelic life, with a phrase and an allusion, no more, sweeping away their crude notions. The dead

'Shall be as the angels in heaven
Shall die no more
Shall be equal to the angels
Shall be children of God
Because they are the children of the resurrection.'

How much is contained in this little summary! How little can we add to it even to-day!

Then He went on to their fundamental teaching. In the problem they put before Him they spoke as if they believed in the resurrection of the body, but what they said was meant only to render the belief ridiculous. Jesus ignored all that. At least they had not deceived Him; they had not said one thing with their mouth and in their hearts had believed something quite different. If they were hypocrites at other times, at least there and then they were not hypocritical. He, too, would treat them openly; He would follow them into their inmost souls. He would throw light on their darkness which they could hardly refuse; to the end He would give them the means to believe in Him if they would use it.

Therefore after speaking of the angels He went on:

'And as concerning the resurrection of the dead
Have you not read in the book of Moses
How in the bush
God spoke to him saying
I am the God of Abraham
And the God of Isaac
And the God of Jacob?
For he is not the God of the dead
But of the living
For all live to him
You therefore do greatly err.'

Jahve! I am who am! He who is! The answer to their scepticism was contained in the very name of God which they used every day. Their God was not a God of past or future; He was a God of an everlasting present. To Him Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob were not past and gone, they are; to Him their own future is not that which will be, it is. What this meant who could tell? This at least they knew; it was the first revelation God had given to them of His own nature. To Him there was no future, all is; therefore men, once being, must be to Him for ever. Jahve!

'This is my name for ever
And this is my memorial unto all generations.'
'For all live to him.'
'To him all are.'

Whether this be the explanation of the words of Jesus or not, it is evident that they went home, and were perfectly transparent, both to the Sadducees and to the others about, who were at all learned in the Scriptures. The former had come to ridicule. By a word they had been reduced to silence; by another word the whole Sadducaic position had been overturned. They had nothing more to say. And the others, the Scribes who interpreted the Scriptures, whether they were enemies of Jesus or not, how could they but marvel at this new application of the very name of God, so simple when seen, so obvious, yet needing the eye of utter truth and simplicity to discover it? They could not restrain their admiration. As the Sadducees stood there silenced, those Scribes broke out in His praise:

'Master', they said,
'Thou hast said well';

and in this praise the people gathered round joined:

'And the multitudes hearing it
Were in admiration at his doctrine.'

(7) *The Question of the Chief Commandment*

During all this time the Pharisees in their place of meeting were alive to all that was going on. They had been beaten and silenced but they had not given up the fight. As the day proceeded they were aware of the authority that was carrying all before it; the effect on them was only the more to determine them against this usurper of their rights.

Their spies were still active in the crowd ; reports of what was said and done were continually coming in. Now at last it was brought to them how from the Law Jesus had silenced their rivals the Sadducees, and that on their own favourite doctrine. This at least was something at which they could not cavil ; this was interesting ; it induced some of them to come out of their hiding-place and once more join with the people. Scribes, too, were with them ; Jesus once more had shown an insight into the written word which it was well worth their while to follow.

These joined themselves to others who had stood by all the time. Among the latter was one who had been much impressed. He had heard the refutation of the Sadducees ; he was himself a skilled doctor of the Law ; from the able way Jesus had handled a single text he thought to try Him by taking Him on a broader ground. Not with any malice it would seem, but with the intention, perhaps, of testing to what school of thought Jesus would incline, this doctor of the Law, in a pause that followed, propounded his question.

' Master ', he said,
' Which is the great commandment of the law ? '

From all that had gone before during that day one might have expected that Jesus again would have avoided the question. On another occasion, down the road leading to the Jordan, He had been asked the like, and He had made the man answer himself. Then He had been asked what one should do that he might gain eternal life, and He had replied by another question, asking what was the teaching of the Law. And the man had answered ; he had quoted the two commandments

' Thou shalt love the Lord thy God '

and

' Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

And Jesus had been satisfied ; He had simply replied :

' This do and thou shalt live.'

So again on this occasion He might have done the same ; from what He had done and said that day one would have been prepared to find Him do the same. But He did not. Instead, as if all His old teaching manner had suddenly come back to Him, with that solemn emphasis which we have seen on special occasions, He took the question as from one who would willingly be guided, and gave it its answer. His voice rang clear for everyone to catch it as He said :

‘ The first commandment of all is this
Hear, O Israel
The Lord thy God is one God
And thou shalt love the Lord thy God
With thy whole heart
And with thy whole soul
And with thy whole mind
And with thy whole strength
This is the greatest
And the first commandment.’

He added a second :

‘ And the second is like to this
Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself
There is no other commandment greater than these
On these two commandments
Dependeth the whole law and the prophets.’

May we not look upon these words as the climax of the teaching of Jesus on this earth, the peroration of all that He has had to say to men ? They are the last words He spoke to the world in the way of teaching ; all that follows is in a very different strain. In these words, as He Himself says, is summed up all the teaching of the past ; in these same words, as S. Paul says later, is summed up the whole duty of man.

As words they were not new. Jesus had not come to destroy but to perfect. He would take the teaching of Moses, and would give it a new and deeper meaning ; revelation would never contradict itself. In his last great exhortation, in his last appeal to His people to be faithful, Moses had brought together all he had taught in the ever-to-be-remembered passage :

‘ Hear, O Israel
The Lord our God is one Lord
Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
With thy whole heart
And with thy whole soul
And with thy whole strength

And those words which I command thee this day
Shall be in thy heart
And thou shalt tell them to thy children
And thou shalt meditate upon them
Sitting in thy house
And walking on thy journey
Sleeping and rising
And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand
And they shall move and shall be between thy eyes
And thou shalt write them in the entry
And on the doors of thy house.'

Deuteronomy vi, 4–9.

The letter of this commandment the Jews had scrupulously observed. These words they wore on their arms and their foreheads, they displayed them beside the doorposts of their dwellings; no other words were better known to all the children of Israel.

And the second was scarcely less well known. In the Law it was written:

'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart
But reprove him openly
Lest thou incur sin through him
Seek not revenge
Nor be mindful of the injury of thy citizens
Thou shalt love thy friend as thyself
I am the Lord.'

Leviticus xix, 17, 18.

As the years had flowed on, how these two commandments had grown in significance! As the truth of God had developed, as the relation of man with man had been made more intimate, it had been seen how deep down these two commandments sank into the very essence of all life. When now one of themselves had been asked what he considered the essentials of salvation, he had quoted these texts and no other.

But in these last two years this new Preacher had given them greater significance. Long and lovingly He had dwelt on the new idea of God that He had taught them; of God His Father, of God their Father, of God the Father of both Him and them. Long had He dwelt on the new relationship that this brought between men; men, brethren,

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men, sons of God, men, children of a common Father. And out of these had grown a new love, a love of Fatherhood and sonship, a love of brotherhood ; of a Father's love for His own, and of the return of that love for the Father ; of a brother's love for a brother, and of the return of that brother's love. Yes, indeed, while He had retained all that the Old Dispensation had taught, He had lifted these commandments to another plane, a plane that included everything that had yet been taught by every lawyer, by every prophet. Later, when the perspective has been completed, S. Paul looks back upon this scene, and sees in it the climax of all, when to the Galatians he writes :

'For all the law is fulfilled in one word
Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'
Galatians v, 14.

and again to the Romans :

'Owe no man anything
But to love one another
For he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law
For
Thou shalt not commit adultery
Thou shalt not kill
Thou shalt not steal
Thou shalt not bear false witness
Thou shalt not covet
And if there be any other commandment
It is comprised in this word
Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself
The love of our neighbour worketh no evil
Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law.'
Romans xiii, 8–10.

and that rugged saint, S. James, sums up the same in his own way :

'If then you fulfil the royal law
According to the scriptures
Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself
You do well.'
James ii, 8.

On this note, then, Jesus ended ; on this note the whole of the New Dispensation began ; on these two commandments, not on one only but on both, on the second as the fulfilment of the first, the whole of Christendom has been built. Dogma is essential that we may know Him whom we must love ; moral is essential that we may know our neighbour and the duties of love towards him ; but underneath both moral and dogma is love. Without love they are but the sounding of brass and the tinkling of cymbals.

'If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels
And have not love
I am become as sounding brass
Or a tinkling cymbal
And if I should have prophecy
And should know all mysteries
And all knowledge
And if I should have all faith
So that I could remove mountains
And have not love
I am nothing
And if I should distribute all my goods
To feed the poor
And if I should deliver my body to be burned
And have not love
It profiteth me nothing.'

1 Corinthians xiii, 1–3.

Such is the heart of Christianity, and its rays reach out across the world, through all places and through all times. It penetrates into the darkness. The heathen catches the ray and is at once warmed and enlightened by it. It reveals to him what he has never seen before, the inner beauty of himself. It stirs him, as he has never been stirred before, to go himself and do likewise. Love of God is now a new thing to him, and he must look for the God whom he may love ; love of his neighbour is now a new force, and for him he must learn even to die. This may not be conversion, but it is a new atmosphere, a new horizon, a new earth, a new food and drink ; and if he is fed with it, if Christianity itself will not fail him, if it will keep itself pure, if it will beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, if it will love, and will give in love, then the future everywhere is certain. Dogma enkindled by love ; moral tempered by love ; these are the weapons of Jesus Christ. For without love what are they ? We have said they are sounding brass and tinkling cymbals ; shall we not say rather they are rattling bones and clanging chains ? Such at least those call them who look on from outside and hear them propounded, and do not catch the love within that should give them life and meaning. When we would teach them, let us begin as He began, with the Our Father; then we may follow with the Creed; so shall we and so shall our penitents

'Receive the kingdom of God
As little children.'

It would seem that something of this caught the heart of the Scribe who had asked the question. Whatever had been his motive in asking it, the answer had gone home. However familiar the truth, this time it was revealed to him with a new significance. He was touched, one might say he was humbled; whatever his friends about him might think or say, he would give Jesus thanks for what He had said.

'And the scribe said to him
Well Master hast thou said in truth
That there is one God
And that there is no other beside him
And that he should be loved
With the whole heart
And with the whole understanding
And with the whole soul
And with the whole strength
And to love one's neighbour as oneself is a greater thing
Than all holocausts and sacrifices.'

The comment of the Scribe showed clearly enough where his thoughts tended. He was contrasting the doctrine of Jesus with that of his fellow Scribes and Pharisees. To them, whatever their words, in practice the first commandment was the observance of the Law, the offering of holocausts and sacrifices. No matter how much the prophets of old had denounced it, yet here as they stood with the noise all about them of preparation for the Paschal Feast, it was only too clear what was uppermost in the minds of the leaders of the people. There were many who resented it, many who shook their heads but could do nothing; that Jesus should so have raised His voice, in protest yet in words that none could have resented, was a joy to them all.

Jesus looked at the Scribe. In the midst of this day of contest and rejection, it was joy indeed that at this moment, and from such a man as this, He should receive this recognition. True, it could not be said to be very much. As it stood it was less than He had received at the beginning from the Pharisee, Nicodemus; it was less than had been given Him by that other Pharisee who had cried:

'Blessed is he
That shall eat bread in the kingdom of heaven.'

But at least it told one thing. The heart of the Scribe rang true, and responded to the truth; it had made the first step to conversion. There yet remained the faith; faith in Jesus Himself for what He was; but on such ground that might be hoped to come in time. He would thank the man for his confession; He would encourage him to more:

'And Jesus seeing that he had answered wisely
Said to him
Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.'

(8) *The Question of the Son of David*

We come now to the last encounter. Standing by was that group of Pharisees who had joined the crowd after they had heard of the discomfiture of their rivals the Sadducees. They were silent, they no longer knew what to say. After their experience of that morning, following on so many before, it was no longer wise to try Him on anything. But if they would leave Him alone He would not leave them. For a time He spoke again to the people round Him. There in the Temple court, after all others had been silenced, He let the whole world see that He, and He alone, was the real teacher belonging to that place. One looks on Him with awe at this last moment; never before has He shown so clearly that He is the Master, that He is the Lord of the Temple.

But when He had finished, then for the last time He turned to the Pharisees. He had spoken to the people, as always, in their own language, now He would speak to the Pharisees in theirs; for the moment He, too, would be a Pharisee. Their method—shall we say their amusement?—was to ask themselves questions akin to conundrums concerning the meaning of texts of Scripture. He would follow their method; He would be a Master in Israel; wherever He had gained His knowledge, which they ridiculed, He would show them that even in their own school practice He was more than their equal. When He was gone it should not be said of Him that He did not understand them and their ways. And first He would begin with that which was obvious :

‘ And the Pharisees being gathered together
Jesus answering said
Teaching in the temple
What think you of Christ ?
Whose son is he ? ’

The answer seemed clear. The one title with which He would be distinguished was that which they had heard sung to Himself yesterday and the day before. It still rang in their ears. They objected to it then ; they objected to it now no less. And in answering His question they could give reason. Whose son was the Christ ? They had said it before. A prophet came not out of Galilee but out of Judæa. The Christ was to be no common workman’s son ; he was to be of the royal house. Therefore they could answer Him boldly. By His question He had given them their opportunity to set Him at nought.

‘ They say to him
David’s.’

Now immediately Jesus took them up. He made no claim of the title to Himself ; He did not prove, as He might have proved, that indeed He belonged to the line of the great king ; that would have been little to His purpose. No ; instead, He would still be a Pharisee with Pharisees. He would ask them a question which He knew they could not answer, which would humble them yet more before the people, and which if they could but think upon it, might make them discover in the title ‘ Son of David ’ more than they had hitherto suspected.

‘ He saith to them
How do the scribes say
That Christ is the son of David ?
How then doth David by the Holy Ghost
Call him Lord
Saying in the book of Psalms
The Lord said to my Lord
Sit thou on my right hand
Until I make thy enemies thy footstool
David therefore himself calleth him Lord
And whence is he then his son ? ’

To the Pharisee, and those who looked for the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, the argument was clear. To them the Messias would be a son of David ; to them that son of David would one day restore the kingdom of David ; then would Israel be restored to her rightful place among the nations. But Jesus bids them look again. The Messias is called by David himself ' My Lord '. But a father does not call his son ' My Lord '. Therefore ' the son of David ' meant something much more than that crude, confined sense which they gave it. But if the sonship meant more, then the kingship meant more ; and if the kingship meant more, then also did the kingdom. If David could not only call Him Lord, but could also offer Him his services to subdue His enemies, then the very kingdom of David, the kingdom of Israel, the whole people of the Jews, was but the servant of a greater king and a greater kingdom, of which there should be no end.

Jesus had chosen to quote, and had thereby sanctioned by His own application, perhaps the most pregnant prophecy in all the book of Psalms. It told not merely that the Messias, the Christ, would be a King greater than David ; it told that He was born from all eternity, that from His very nature He was Master of the world. It told that He was the greatest of high priests, the High Priest that would fulfil the prophetic type of Melchisedech. It told that though the Kingdom would set out from Sion, yet would it not be confined to one nation ; the King of the Kingdom would judge all the world. And it ended on a note of mystery. The King would be King indeed, but He would attain His throne only through tribulation.

' The Lord said to my Lord
Sit thou at my right hand
Until I make thy enemies thy footstool
The Lord will send forth the sceptre of thy power
Out of Sion
Rule thou in the midst of thy enemies
With thee is the principality in the day of thy strength
In the brightness of the saints
From the womb before the day-star I begot thee
The Lord hath sworn
And he will not repent
Thou art a priest for ever

According to the order of Melchisedech
The Lord at thy right hand hath broken kings
In the day of his wrath
He shall judge among nations
He shall fill ruins
He shall crush the heads in the land of many
He shall drink of the torrent in the way
Therefore shall he lift up his head.'
Psalm cix.

Surely a sublime peroration with which to conclude His long controversy with the Pharisees. He had borne with them very long. From the earliest days, more than thirty years before, He had borne with them. Then they had confessed a greater knowledge than now they cared to own; for when they had been asked where their King would be born, they had known He would be born in Bethlehem. Later, when He was twelve years of age, He had been found

' In the temple
Sitting in the midst of the doctors
Hearing them
And asking them questions
And all they that heard him were astonished
At his wisdom
And his answers.'

In that audience on that last day were there perhaps some who, as He again heard them, and asked them questions, recalled a child's voice and a child's question uttered almost on that very spot twenty years before?

Since that day what had He endured? Infinite suspicion, infinite slander, endless abuse, endless questioning, never once from the Pharisaic body so much as condescension to be given a fair hearing. From the beginning it had always been:

' What sign dost thou shew?'

and when a sign was given it was not accepted.

' Who is this man that speaketh blasphemies?
Who can forgive sins
But only God alone?'

and when He proved His power they only hated Him the more.

'Why does he eat with publicans and sinners?'

and when an answer was given to them they did but turn away.

'Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath?'

and when He showed them why it was lawful to do a good deed on the Sabbath, they replied by plotting to destroy Him.

'He hath Beelzebub
And by the prince of devils he casteth out devils';

and when they had at last said that, then He turned upon them. From that day it had been very different. They had still pursued Him with their questions:

'Why do thy disciples not walk according to the traditions of the elders?'
'Shew us a sign from heaven.'
'Does the Christ come from Galilee?'
'Thou bearest witness of thyself
Thy witness is not true.'
'Do we not say well
That thou art a Samaritan
And hast a devil?'
'If thou be the Christ
Tell us plainly.'

So the weary conflict had gone on. They would not; secure in their stronghold they would not. They had made for themselves the God whom they would serve, they had made for themselves their own Messias. They had swept away everything and everyone, not excluding the prophets, who did not harmonize with their own idea. They had rebuilt their faith on this basis, a profitable faith, a self-serving faith, a specious faith with a power of twisting words that could make it appear yet more specious, a faith of forms and ceremonies and show, a faith that made them almighty over their people, a faith in which the heart was crushed to death, and truth of life was no more, and dignity and pride and hatred and expedient lying had been made consistent with the service of the Holy of Holies. He had seen it all from the beginning; He had endured it without once striking back. He had rebuked it, He had instructed it, He had taught it, He had appealed to it, before the world

He had refuted it, yet always with the same result. Now it was the end; but as He turned away from it He gave it one last lesson which, if taken, might lift it even at this last hour out of itself. It is again an instance of the paradox of Jesus Christ; while He is most mercilessly severe, yet does His yielding mercy and appeal ring through every word.

The people heard Him and were glad. They may not have understood; they were trained by their teachers to obey, not to understand. But it was to them a satisfaction to find their hero of the moment, who 'went about doing good', evidently master of those whom they were compelled to serve. And for the Pharisees themselves, more than ever were they silenced. What He had asked, none could answer; what He had said had opened to them visions that threatened to absorb their petty horizon. Let them follow along that route, and they might come to see that they were wrong. It was dangerous, now more dangerous than ever, to deal with this Man, even to ask Him questions; definitely, finally, they left Him alone. Thus at that moment, three days to the hour before He was hanging on the cross, Jesus was acknowledged the Temple's Lord. At that moment He was fulfilling the prophecy He had just quoted:

'The Lord said to my Lord
Sit thou at my right hand
Until I make thy enemies thy footstool.'
'And a great multitude heard him gladly
And no man was able to answer him a word
Neither durst any man from that day forth
Ask him any more questions.'

(9) *The Condemnation of the Pharisees*

The rejection was formal and complete. We can see the sadness, mingled with dignity, with which Jesus cast His last glance upon the silent group of Pharisees. We can see on their side the look of a baffled rival, the hard eyes, the set lips, the determination all the more determined that said: 'I will not serve'. This time they did not turn away; come what might they would stand their ground; in their hatred they were now beyond fear. He turned away from them; He looked at His Twelve. Formally now before all the people He would install them in their place;

here in the Temple the promise of that Jordan meeting, of the call at Bethsaida, of the choice on the Mount behind Capharnaum, of the promise given near Cæsarea Philippi was fulfilled.

'And in hearing of all the people
He said to his disciples
In his doctrine
Beware of the scribes
Who desire to walk in long robes
And love salutations in the market-place
And to sit in the first chairs in the synagogues
And to have the first places at suppers
Who devour the houses of widows
Under the pretence of long prayers
These shall receive greater condemnation.'

This was His introduction. Then, in presence of His friends and enemies, of His own, the people, and the Pharisees, He broke out into that vehement onset which has not its equal in all literature. No orator has touched the quivering of heart which trembles through it, no artist has matched its vivid colour, no master of words has at once so perfectly combined eloquence with simplicity. No Chrysostom, no Augustine, no Aquinas, has at the same time reached down to such depths of wisdom, while remaining ever in touch with the plainest man about Him. We may not break the flow of the words ; here even more than in the Sermon on the Mount must Jesus be uninterrupted.

'Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples saying : The scribes and Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses ; all things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do. But according to their works do ye not. For they say and do not. For they bind heavy and insupportable burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, and with a finger of their own they will not lift them. And all their works they do for to be seen of men. For they make their phylacteries broad, and enlarge their fringes, and they love the first places at feasts, and the first chairs in the synagogues, and salutations in the market-place ; and to be called by men, Rabbi. But be not you called Rabbi ; for one is your master, and all you are brethren. And call none your father upon earth ; for one is your father, who is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters ;

for one is your master, Christ. He that is the greater among you shall be your servant; and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

'But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men. For you yourselves do not enter in, and those that are going in you suffer not to enter. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you devour the houses of widows, praying long prayers; for this you shall receive the greater judgement. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you go about the sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made you make him the child of hell twofold more than yourselves. Woe to you blind guides, that say: Whosoever shall swear by the temple it is nothing; but he that shall swear by the gold of the temple is a debtor. For whether is greater—the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And whosoever shall swear by the altar it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it, is a debtor. Ye blind; for whether is greater—the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? He therefore that sweareth by the altar, sweareth by it and by all things that are upon it; and whosoever shall swear by the temple sweareth by it and by him that dwelleth in it; and he that sweareth by heaven sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

'Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left the weightier things of the law—judgement and mercy and faith. These things you ought to have done, and not to leave those undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness. Thou blind Pharisee, first make clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, that the outside may become clean.

'Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and all filthiness. So you also outwardly indeed appear to men just, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

that build the sepulchres of the prophets, and adorn the monuments of the just, and say : If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore you are witnesses against yourselves, that you are the sons of them that killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers! You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgement of hell? Therefore behold I send to you prophets and wise men and scribes, and some of them you will put to death and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that upon you may come all the just blood that hath been shed upon the earth from the blood of Abel the just even unto the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachias whom you killed between the temple and the altar. Amen I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation.

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not! Behold your house shall be left to you desolate. For I say to you : you shall not see me henceforth till you say : Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

As we listen to Him speaking His last words to the multitude in the Temple we are almost inevitably thrown back to that first great address on the mountain when 'opening His mouth' He spoke to them ; and when they were in admiration at His doctrine, because He spoke as one having authority and not as the Scribes. On that occasion He had begun with eight blessings, now He concludes with eight woes ; on that occasion the tone had all been encouragement and hope, now it is chiefly threat and warning. Then the Father had been the great centre round which all His teaching turned, now the Father is once mentioned, it is true, but He is the centre from whom there is only to be expected the anger seen in the Old Dispensation. It is the same Jesus who speaks ; that may be recognized in every line ; but He speaks at a very different time, under very different circumstances, after an experience that has compelled a very different front.

It is the same Jesus, quick to respond to every touch and vibration of the life around Him. As with the Galilæans

His every illustration, crowding in one upon another, was taken from the humble life of the humble folk around Him, so here, before these men of Jerusalem and the Temple, He takes up the sights they see for themselves upon the very steps round which they stand. First He reads the hearts of the multitude about Him, torn apart as they are between fear and resentment. The Scribes and Pharisees they could not love, yet must they obey them. At times, when the burthen pressed on them with special violence, when it seemed that the pain was theirs while their masters sat above at their ease, the thought would arise that they should not bow down before these ecclesiastical tyrants. He knew they thought these things ; by His language He showed that He understood, and that they had His fullest sympathy. Nevertheless, He would have them respect lawful authority, however corrupt, however cruel, however hard that authority might be. In what was to follow, whatever indignation He might stir in the rulers, and He feared none of it, of that at least they should not be able to complain. He had always respected their authority as guardians of the Law, as the legal representatives of Moses.

But that done, then He gave His righteous indignation play. He pointed to their broad phylacteries displayed before them, the fringes of their garments waving in the air. Up at the top of the steps they sat in all their pompous glory ; down by the gate, where the buying and selling in preparation was going on, they walked through the crowd and men bowed before them as they passed. Behind Him was the place of Council ; His thoughts wandered thither, and again He poured scorn on the scenes men witnessed there. The proud assumption which made them alone the guardians of the key of heaven, the value they set on their own prayers, the impositions they laid on helpless women to procure them, the keenness with which they bound their followers around them, the meticulous hair-splitting about the nature of oaths and vows, the decisions always tending to their own advantage ; their rigid attendance to the taxes, the tithes, the revenues of the Temple, making that the test of the spirit of the people ; their insistence on form, on dignity, on ceremony, on show, as if that alone were their province ; their ignoring of the hearts of those with whom they dealt, their trampling on their very souls, while in their grand security they allowed none to question their sanctity, their judgements, their interpretation of the Law—such were these men as now at last He described them. It was a vivid picture. Those whom He described recognized themselves in every line; the people gazed open-mouthed, for He was putting into words thoughts that had often crossed their minds but which, in their fear and respect for the Law and the lawyers, they had never dared to utter.

And yet again, even as He speaks, His heart has compassion on the people. He bids them obey their masters in all things in which it is their duty to obey, but He does not lay aside His old character, expressed long ago:

'Come to me
All you that labour and are burthened
And I will refresh you.'

He looks at the 'heavy and insupportable burthens' laid by the Law upon their shoulders. He sees them compelled to do grovelling obeisance unworthy of them as free men. He turns to the trembling old women about Him, whose slender resources are extorted from them under plea of religious obligation. He includes in His vision poor victims of idle vows, who find themselves bound under galling obligations because of foolish words they have said. As He looks beyond, His eye catches a glimpse of some newly whitewashed tomb, made spick-and-span before the festival. He sees scaffolding around a monument hard by in course of construction. Nay the very fowls in their basket-cages do not escape Him. He has use for them all, to all life around Him He responds.

Then, with infinite pathos, as if all through His vehement words mercy had been struggling with justice, at the end He breaks down. No sooner has He pronounced the doom,

'Amen I say to thee
All these things shall come upon this generation',

than His heart reacts, and the cry of David over the loss of Absalom is echoed again upon a far greater theme:

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem
Thou that killest the prophets
And stonest them that are sent to thee

How often would I have gathered thy children
As the hen doth gather her little ones under her wing
And thou wouldst not!'

Two days ago, as the Procession of Palms came over Olivet, the same thought had forced itself upon Him and had made Him break into tears. All this day it haunts Him, before it is done He will dwell long upon it.

'Woe to you scribes and Pharisees
Hypocrites';

and

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem
Thou wouldst not!'

coming in the same address, make another of the paradoxes, true to the core yet baffling all analysis, which encircle the heart and the character of Jesus Christ.

The sentence is then passed; it is passed but in a characteristic way. The thunder has gone out of His voice, the vehemence of his appealing has died down; it is as if, against His will, He were yielding to their demand. They wanted their own Temple for themselves; they should have it. They wanted to be rid of Him; they should have that also. But He would warn them of the consequences, and in that warning would be their condemnation. Their home would be a dead thing to them, they would lose Him, and would long for Him, and He would come back to them only as their judge.

'Behold your house shall be left to you
Desolate
For I say to you
You shall not see me henceforth till you say
Blessed is he
That cometh in the name of the Lord.'

(10) *The Widow's Mite*

Thus with these Pharisees the life-struggle was ended. He had won the battle, and then, having won He surrendered: 'Your house shall be left to you'—'You shall not see me henceforth!'—and He turned away from them for the very last time. The day was well advanced; business in the court was active. While the group about Him had been large, there were many others in the Temple areas engaged on their own affairs, trafficking and praying, bartering and giving alms, coming in and going out, men from every nation under heaven. Jesus let the crowd about Him disperse; He made as if He would Himself depart, and they took it as a sign that they should leave Him. With His Twelve He walked towards the gate. There were stone benches there; close by them were the chests, with their trumpet-like openings, for the reception of the alms of the faithful. Upon one of these benches, opposite to the chests, Jesus sat down. It was time for Him to go; He had done His last day's work and He was weary. Yet was He loath to leave the place, the house of His Father which He was never again to enter, the people of His choice whom He was never again to gather round Him.

He sat there as if to rest before He began His walk over Olivet to Bethania. He was engaged with His own thoughts. The Twelve about Him, seeing that as usual, after the last onset, He had lapsed again into being just the Jesus of Nazareth they knew, had left Him to Himself; the traffic around them gave ample distraction. Yet had Jesus chosen this spot not by mere chance; nowhere could He have sat with greater opportunity of studying human nature as Israel portrayed it. Men and women came in, so earnest about their visit to the Temple, so concentrated on their tasks, that they could take little notice of Him. Men and women went out, their purchases made, their devotions done, murmuring their prayers to themselves as they passed, absorbed, fanatically sincere, both those that thanked God that they were not as the rest of men, and those who came away muttering: 'Be merciful to me, a sinner!' There was the same fixed intensity on all, the same disregard of surroundings. They had been at the shrine and they passed out, conscious of the rest of the world as, in comparison with themselves, hardly human.

In this mood, as they passed the place for their offerings, in one way only could it be displayed. The rich man came by. The eyes of many were upon him, his own enthusiasm stirred him from within. Nowhere more than here, at this time, could he show his devotion to the Temple, his zeal for Israel. Large sums were poured ostentatiously into the chests. It was not vanity, the Jewish conscience had grown too hard for that; it was in itself a mark of devotedness, a mark of sanctity, and therefore men justified themselves in their display. Long ago Jesus had noticed it, and had rebuked it in His own way :

‘ Therefore when thou dost an alms-deed
Sound not a trumpet before thee
As the hypocrites do
In the synagogues and in the streets
That they may be honoured by men
Amen I say to you
They have received their reward.’

But there were others besides these ; simple folk from the country who gave what they could, simple folk to whom the ways of the rich and mighty were just the ways of men living in another world. Rich men might be good men or not, it was no concern of theirs. About them might be truth or falsehood, peace or confusion, jostling crowds or singing pilgrims. They noticed little ; they were children of Abraham, they were in the house of the Lord, they had prayed as their fathers had prayed for long centuries before them, in thanksgiving for the past, in longing expectation of the deliverance to come, and in the glory of all this they let the rest go by. They lived to God and from God, they gave to God even as God gave to them. In Israel’s worst days there were always souls that gave Him their all, in the days of Jesus there were many.

Jesus looked on, watching human nature revealing itself at these offertory boxes. As He did so one such faithful child of Israel passed by. She was a poor woman, and she was a widow ; that was to be seen from her dress. She came from her prayers at the shrine ; she faced the chests gaping to receive her gift. Her little scrip hung by her side, containing dried food, a few trifles, at the bottom two brass coins. She fumbled in her wallet ; she found the coins ; she searched for more and there were none. As she held the two pieces in her fingers it was written on her face that they were her all. She stood still for a moment hesitating ; rather not hesitating, but realizing what she was doing. She was utterly unconscious that the eyes of Jesus were upon her.

He looked at her and—may we not add ?—He loved her. He ‘ loved Martha and her sister Mary ’ ; He looked on the rich young man ‘ and loved him ’. He loved His own

Twelve, who in the strength of that love had left all and followed Him. And He loved the poor and valued their love in return. As the woman stood there with the brass coins in her fingers He called His distracted Twelve to Him. Silently He pointed to her; they read the whole story in an instant. As they stood there watching, the woman stepped up to the boxes. She let the coins fall without another thought; without a regret, she went down the steps and out through the Golden Gate. He let her go; He said nothing to her; not till He met her in eternity would she know the good she had done that day.

Then when she had gone He spoke. It was hardly necessary; yet would He speak that all the world might one day know.

'And calling his disciples together
He saith to them
Amen I say to you
This poor widow hath cast in more
Than all they who have cast into the treasury
For all they did cast in of their abundance
But she of her want
Cast in all she had
Even her whole living.'

(11) *The Visit of the Greeks*

Before He rose and left the Temple, S. John tells us one more event. The excitement of His presence was over; men were busy now with other things, in preparation for the feast. The priests and rulers in their various occupations were able for the moment to set aside the galling experience of that day. Crowds passed to and fro, crowds from every nation; Jews from Alexandria, Jews from Syria, Jews from Arabia and Babylon, Jews from Antioch and Greece and Rome and other places far beyond. These Jews of the Dispersion had come into the city long ago. They had come as opportunity had offered; when they came they had drunk in all they could at the centre of all their faith. And among other things they learnt of this new event that had happened in these latter days. They were told of John the Baptist, his life and his death; they saw for themselves the esteem in which he was held. They were told of Jesus of Nazareth, before whom John had bowed, of His wonderful words and works, above all of the authority He had asserted here in the Temple. They discovered how many there were who would fain, if they dared, proclaim Him to be the Messias.

Of course, this was a sudden revelation. Prudent-minded Alexandrians, and Greeks, and Romans, with their wider experience of the world than their brethren of Jerusalem, would never be expected to accept such a revelation all at once. On the other hand, they possessed advantages which the men of Judæa had not. Their life among foreign nations had given them broader views ; they were less prejudiced and hide-bound, less subject to the narrow bondage of the Scribes and Pharisees. Greek thought had expanded their ideas, in some cases it had gone so far as to seek an interpretation of the one in the other. It is true this had been done in good faith ; with all these infiltrations they remained, and wished only to remain, faithful Jews. Let it not be forgotten that it was out of these Jews of the Dispersion that the Church of the future was built ; already they had learnt in many places the meaning of persecution.

Whatever conclusions men such as these had drawn from all they had heard since their arrival in the Holy City, at least their curiosity was roused concerning this Jesus of Nazareth of whom so much was said. Now it chanced that at this moment, while the Master was still resting by the gate, some of these men passed in among the crowd of worshippers. It was pointed out to them that He was there ; His followers were standing about Him ; here was an opportunity which might not occur again of meeting Him, and speaking with Him, and judging for themselves what manner of prophet He might be. They looked for one who might introduce them ; on the outside of the group around Him was one, evidently a follower, yet evidently, too, one with whom it would be easy to speak. It was Philip, the easy, meek, affable, accommodating child-Apostle Philip of Bethsaida in Galilee, the man whom everybody took for granted.

They came near to Philip ; with their polished Greek manners, so different from the ways of Galilæans, they treated him with marked respect. One who belonged to the entourage of the Master, no matter what his own qualifications, was entitled to homage from strangers.

'Sir', they said
'We would see Jesus.'

Philip was taken aback; this was the first time he had had to deal with men from so far away, with men so evidently distinguished. Of course he was delighted, he was honoured; his old enthusiasm kindled at the thought that here were perhaps new followers of the Master. Philip who had brought Nathanael to the feet of Jesus in the earliest days, Philip who naturally, yet all unconsciously, had been the central figure when the five thousand had been miraculously fed, Philip always so believing, so full of confidence, jumping at conclusions which his optimistic heart dictated, opened his eyes and busied himself when these Greek gentlemen called him 'Sir', and said they wished to see the Master. He must see about it; he must do what he could. But the moment just then might not be opportune. Jesus had gone through a very hard day; He had been tried in ways more wearying than ever. He had worn Himself out with speaking, in warding off His enemies and in warning and encouraging His friends; at this instant He was resting before His return to Bethania. Besides Philip could not be sure whether men of this type would at that moment be welcome. All that day Jesus had been carefully dividing His friends from His enemies. Clearly He was fixing the walls of separation; he that was not with Him would have to be against Him, and it was not certain on which side these Greek visitors would stand. Philip himself must be prudent, even while he longed to push them forward. He must take advice about it; he would consult Andrew, the wise head in such matters, who had never lost the respect due to him since the day when before all others he had said:

'We have found the Messias.'

Philip took Andrew aside. The two put their heads together. This was an opportunity that might not occur again; these men might learn the truth, and carry it back with them to Greece, and who knew what might not follow? On the other hand, just now the Master was weary; and though Philip and Andrew understood Him in these conditions, yet the Greeks might misunderstand and go away unimpressed. And then, there was Jesus Himself to be considered. It had been a hard day; His last words on the Temple steps had given the impression that He wished to do no more. To push these men upon Him, these educated, intellectual Greeks, and thereby, perhaps, to provoke another wearisome discussion, might seem beyond all reason.

They talked the matter over, youthful, enthusiastic Philip, and Andrew, Simon's elder brother, both of them princes-to-be and rulers of the Kingdom. Indeed they were wise men, these fishermen from Bethsaida, on whom at that moment the fate of nations seemed to be depending. At length they came to a conclusion. They decided that at least an introduction might be made. We can see the wise Andrew encouraging Philip, showing him that no harm could come of that, in the end agreeing to support him in his solemn task. They would go to the Lord together; they would tell Him about the Greeks. Let Jesus Himself then decide what He would do.

> ' Philip cometh and telleth Andrew
> Again Andrew and Philip told Jesus.'

Meanwhile it was not to be expected that Jesus would be left long alone. As the Greeks had noticed Him so had many others. He had rested close by the main thoroughfare, and a group had gathered insensibly around Him. Andrew and Philip made their way through the crowd. They told Him of the Greeks outside; would it please Him that they should be introduced?

From the seat on which He sat Jesus looked up at them. At once they saw that His thoughts were elsewhere. Already that morning He had said that His work was done; He had ended with that cry to Jerusalem which had come from a broken heart. Since then He had lapsed into silence, relieved only by His word of praise for the widow woman and her offering. It is true they had heard, but they had failed to understand what He said; as they had always failed whenever He had spoken of the coming doom. They could look back at Him, and feel in their dim way that another struggle was going on in His heart; anguish at the vision of all that He had said and done and it had all been in vain; anguish at the prospect before Him. This ending was but the beginning of another end. They felt something of it for it was written in His face, but to fathom it, perhaps even to sympathize with it, was beyond them.

But Jesus knew, only too well He knew; and in His own characteristic way His soul stood up to face it. It had always been so; when things had seemed hardest, then had He shown Himself brightest; always He had looked through the blackness to the sunshine beyond. When John had been imprisoned, then and not before had He declared that the Kingdom had come. When men most attacked Him in the Temple and sought His life, then did He announce Himself the Light of the World, the Door of the sheepfold, the Good Shepherd. When He had to warn His own of the coming crucifixion, always He concluded with the assurance that He would rise again. When in the country about Jericho the Pharisees had resolved against Him, then had He found this matter for thanksgiving;

'Heavenly Father
I give thee thanks
That thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent
And hast revealed them to little ones
Yea, Father
For so hath it been pleasing in thy sight.'

The same spirit was on Him now. It was time for Him to go; He had rested long enough; there was no further reason for Him to delay. It was the last minute in the Temple. Definitely He left it rejected; the gloom behind Him and before Him never hung blacker over Him than now. Now must He be shamed before the world; now must He be deserted; now must He die; now must His Father be ignored as never before. But He would not look at all this, or rather He would look through it. His hour of shame? It should be His hour of glory. His time to die? His death should bring life eternal. His desertion? No, He would have His ministers one day in numbers to follow Him. His Father ignored? In the end all this should redound to the Father's glory. The request of Philip and Andrew He seemed scarcely to have heard; the Greeks He seemed to leave unnoticed; nevertheless the Jesus they saw and heard that moment was one they were not likely to forget for the remainder of their lives.

Jesus rose from His seat. He looked at Andrew and Philip, yet did not seem to see them; He looked beyond them, into another world. The suffering in His heart was being beaten down; He was forcing it down to its proper place. There was a ring of triumph in the midst of tears when now His voice rang out:

'But Jesus answered them saying
The hour is come
That the Son of Man should be glorified
Amen, amen I say to you
Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die
Itself remaineth alone
But if it die
It bringeth forth much fruit
He that loveth his life
Shall lose it
But he that hateth his life in this world
Keepeth it unto life eternal
If any man minister to me
Let him follow me
And where I am
There also shall my minister be
If any man minister to me
Him will my Father honour
Now is my soul troubled
And what shall I say?
Father
Save me from this hour
But for this cause I came unto this hour
Father
Glorify thy name.'

His cry had ended in a prayer. It was as though, do what He would, the prospect was too much for Him. He struggled with Himself; He appealed for help; He insisted again that all that was before Him was the whole will of His Father; however terrible, in the end it would be for His glory. It was an anticipation of that other prayer to be uttered in two days from now:

'Father
If it be possible
Let this chalice pass from me
Yet not my will
But thine be done.'

Immediately His prayer was heard. We are told:

'A voice therefore came from heaven
I have both glorified it
And will glorify it again.'

Twice before have we been told of this voice from heaven. The first was at the Jordan, at the outset of His career, when in answer to His first great act of self-surrender,

'Behold a voice from heaven saying
This is my beloved Son
In whom I am well pleased.'

Again at the Transfiguration, when another phrase was added:

'This is my beloved son
In whom I am well pleased
Hear ye him.'

Now once more at the very end it is heard, and this time in solemn confirmation.

'Father
Glorify thy name
A voice therefore came from heaven
I have both glorified it
And will glorify it again.'

What was the nature of this voice, on any one of those occasions, who shall say? By the Jordan it would seem to have been heard by Jesus and the Baptist alone; on the mountain by the three, Peter, James, and John, as Peter in another place testifies. Here in the Temple court many heard the sound, though perhaps none but Jesus knew what was said. But the sound itself struck the people round with astonishment. Jesus had spoken; He had appealed to His Father; at once, in that clear midday sky, when thunder might have been pronounced impossible, there sounded overhead a noise as of a clap of thunder.

'The multitude therefore that stood and heard said
That it thundered.'

But others were less easily contented.

'Others said
An angel spoke to him.'

Whatever it might be it renewed the strength and courage of Jesus. As later

'An angel came
And strengthened him',

and in the power of that strength He was able to go forward and say :

‘ Rise, let us go
Behold he that would betray me is at hand ’,

so now in the strength of that voice from heaven He could look far beyond the immediate present, and see the victory that would come. At the beginning, on a certain mountain-top, the battle had been formally declared. There ‘ the prince of this world ’ had parleyed with Him, and had offered to surrender, but it must be on his own terms.

‘ All these are mine
And to whom I will I give them
If therefore falling down thou wilt adore me
All shall be thine.’

And Jesus had rejected those terms. He had preferred to do battle. Now at the end He could look back ; and in the strength of the voice of His Father He knew that He had won. He could look into the future, and know that His crowning humiliation was to be His crowning victory. He could know that round the Cross the whole world would one day gather. He could look further forward still and see through all time the beaten enemy continuing to do battle, but on His side He could see crosses being for ever raised, men being continually crucified upon them, and in every crucifixion a new defeat for ‘ the prince of this world ’. The vision of Jesus in the Temple at the end responded well to His vision on the mountain at the beginning. With sadness overcome by exultation in His voice,

‘ Jesus answered and said
The voice came not because of me
But for your sakes
Now is the judgement of the world
Now shall the prince of this world be cast out
And I
If I be lifted up from the earth
Will draw all things to myself
Now this he said
Signifying what death he should die.’

The hour was drawing nearer and nearer. He had the human horror of it all ; humanly He shrank from it, not for His own sake only, but for the sake of those who would so do Him to death. Humanly He might wish it could be otherwise ; the moan was ever in His heart :

‘ If it be possible
Let this chalice pass from me ’.

But it was the Father’s will that He should go through with it, and therefore it was best. And being the best, He would see that so it must be done.

‘ Come to me
All you that labour and are burthened
And I will refresh you ’ ;
‘ I
If I be lifted up
Will draw all things to myself.’

The one was the price of the other.

‘ He hath borne our griefs
And hath carried our reproaches.’
‘ If any man will come after me
Let him deny himself
And take up his cross daily
And follow me.’

Once more was the one the price of the other ; and for this reason alone, even if there were nothing else, the tragedy was worth while.

‘ If I be lifted up ’. Jesus had made use of an accepted euphemism ; it was the common term to express crucifixion. And so those understood it who looked on. By this time a crowd had again gathered ; it was a favourable crowd, one that was inclined to say, as it had said before :

‘ Is not this the Messias ? ’

Yet He would persist in saying that He would die, and that by a death so degrading. But what said the Scripture ? Did it not say, not once but many times, that the Messias would live for ever ?

‘ The Lord hath sworn
And he will not repent
Thou art a priest for ever
According to the order of Melchisedech.’
Psalm cix, 4.

‘ And David my servant
Shall be their prince for ever.’
Ezechiel xxxvii, 25.

Upon their belief in this eternity on earth rested much of their notion of the Kingdom. They could not but ask Him what He meant.

‘ The multitude answered him
We have heard out of the scripture
That Christ abideth for ever
And how sayest thou
The Son of man must be lifted up ?
Who is this Son of man ? ’

Thus they included a second problem with the first. They demurred at the title which He had so regularly taken to Himself of ‘ the Son of man ’. To them it was a demeaning title ; to them it implied something not altogether suited to their notion of the Messias. For those who would rightly interpret the term this comment of the people is important. He called Himself the Son of Man ; He said that He would die ; the multitude with a kind of instinct joined the two together. The Son of Man meant to them one who could die, yet the Christ would live for ever. How then could He be the Christ ?

Directly Jesus did not answer them ; it was now too late for that. Better was it for Him to warn them of the only means by which this and all other problems would be solved. They did not understand, they did not see ; so long as they persisted in their own interpretation of the Kingship and the Kingdom they would never see. Let them set this aside ; let them come out of their darkness ; let them while there was yet time, in the two days that remained, ponder on Him who had said :

‘ I am the light of the world
He that followeth me
Walketh not in darkness
But shall have the light of life.’

Let them look at that light and believe in it ; and even now, at this eleventh hour, all might yet be well. In this last word He told them, what all mankind has discovered ever since ; that in Him is focused all the understanding of mankind, without Him all is darkness and groping. It was a wonderful note on which to end.

'Jesus therefore said to them
Yet a little while the light is among you
Walk whilst you have the light
That the darkness overtake you not
And he that walketh in darkness
Knoweth not where he goeth
Whilst you have the light
Believe in the light
That you may be the children of the light.'

As we listen to these last words of Jesus to men, we recognize His consistency, not only during His life, but also through all time; that consistent offering of Himself, that consistent patience with men, waiting till He is accepted, that forgetting of Himself in His eager longing for the lifting up of men, that constant contrast in His soul of darkness and light, death and life, which met Him as He looked upon mankind, that goal for which He worked, which He alone understood and understands, and which is the world's own ideal:

'That you may be the children of the light.'

. . . . . .

'In him was life
And the life was the light of men
And the light shineth in the darkness

. . . . . .

That was the true light
Which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world

. . . . . .

As many as received him
He gave them power to become sons of God
To them that believe in his name

. . . . . .

Brethren, we are now sons of God
And we know not what we shall be.'

John has caught this light more than the others. Paul has applied it to mankind; Peter from his watch-tower has seen its effects, and has summed it up in a memorable sentence:

'You are a chosen generation
A kingly priesthood
A holy nation
A purchased people
That you may declare his virtues
Who hath called you out of darkness
Into his marvellous light.'

1 Peter ii, 9.

The work was now finished; the last word was uttered; there was nothing more for Him to do but to prepare for and ascend His throne.

'These things Jesus spoke
And he went away
And hid himself from them.'

CHAPTER XXXVII

111. The Reflexion of John

AT this point S. John once more pauses in his narrative to look back on all that has happened. He sees Jesus leave the Temple for the last time, a disappointed Man ; His work there has been a failure. They had nothing against Him, everything was on His side. This only they could say, that He was not according to their mind, that to accept Him was to acknowledge their own defeat, that such a Messias, such a King, such a Priest, such a Prophet, was to make their last state worse than the first. No, right or wrong they would not have Him ; and having made up their minds beforehand it was then easy to prove that they were right and He was wrong.

S. John sees it all, the overwhelming evidence and yet the rejection.

> ' He came unto his own
> And his own received him not ' ;

and he finds comfort in the thought that even this is a further sign that had been foretold. The Messias would indeed be a great Messias ; He would be a King, of His Kingdom there would be no end ; and yet none the less He would be despised and rejected, not only then but always. S. John saw it now. The time had been when he had been consumed with indignation because a few Samaritans had made light of his Master ; he was not indignant now. In the old days he had burnt with high ambitions to be great and to do great things in the Kingdom ; now he knew that the greatest of all great things was to drink the chalice. It had been the first lesson the Twelve had been taught ; it was the last lesson that they learnt. But when they learnt it, how it transformed everything, their understanding of Him and His life, their understanding of themselves and the Kingdom, their understanding of the goal of all being, in this world and in the next !

Therefore there is hope even in the sadness with which he reflects on this rejection, and recalls the prophecies which had to be fulfilled.

'And whereas he had done so many miracles before them
They believed not in him
That the saying of Isaias the prophet might be fulfilled
Which he said
Lord, who hath believed our hearing?
And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?'

With these words Isaias had opened his description of the suffering Messias, for long so utterly unintelligible, now so very clear. And S. John looks at it all, and sees in it the wonderful guidance of God's hand, who permits man to have his way, and to reject Him if he will, and yet out of it all brings only that which shall redound to His greater glory. They would be blind, therefore God let them be blinded; they would have hardened hearts, therefore God allowed them to be hardened; they would not be converted to the new horizon, therefore God would leave them unhealed. So had the prophet foretold; so, long ago, had Matthew, and Mark, and Luke read the meaning of his prophecy; in that had Paul found the key that opened the world to the Gentiles.

'Therefore they would not believe
Because Isaias said again
He hath blinded their eyes
And hardened their heart
That they should not see with their eyes
Nor understand with their heart
And be converted
And I should heal them.'

Still this was not the whole story. In spite of the consistent sorrow with which S. John has drawn his picture from the outset, he has ever and anon let flashes of light come in to relieve the blackness. If

'He came unto his own
And his own received him not',

yet there were some who having

'Received him
To them he gave power
To become sons of God
To them that believe in his name.'

If from the beginning the Pharisees rejected Him, yet from the beginning, too, was there a Nicodemus. If Samaria made light of Him, yet the men of Sychar did not. If in the Temple the multitude sought His life, yet in that very place we are told that many, very many, believed in Him and asked :

> ' When the Messias cometh
> Shall he do more signs than this man doeth ? '

So at this moment is he able to qualify his general statement. If the chief men and the Pharisees rejected Jesus, yet there were some who knew in their hearts that they rejected Him in bad faith. To say nothing of Nicodemus, and Gamaliel, and Joseph of Arimathea, and their following, there were others who believed and, if they had dared, would have proclaimed Him. There were Pharisees and Sadducees who had gone down to the Jordan in the early days to John, not all as critics and enemies, and these had not forgotten. There were well-intentioned Pharisees, however shallow and superficial, like Simon of Magdala, and that other Simon of Bethania, and others of their kind who had always been disposed to treat Him with consideration. There were Scribes and doctors of the Law who had from time to time come and questioned Him, in no carping spirit, but because they believed at least in His power of interpretation, and who had openly extolled His answers. There were rich men, not unlike the young man who had come to Him beyond the Jordan, or friends of Lazarus and Martha and Mary, who were too experienced in men and affairs to be deceived by Pharisaic bigotry. There were elders of the type of Simeon, priests of the mind of Zachary, many more who in the midst of the welter of the times still ' looked for the expectation of Israel ', and saw in Him the signs being fulfilled. There were men in power, in Church and in State, who would gladly have owned Him but feared. To them above all things else, truth or no truth, it was essential that the existing state of things should be maintained, and to acknowledge Him might mean danger.

And to all of these, in one way or another, the duty of acknowledging Him was hard, the consequences unendurable. Should they take His side, then would they be ostracized from their community. Their society would no longer look at them ; they would be branded as disloyal ;

they would be outcast from their dearly loved national synagogues. Should they accept Him, what could they get in return? Association with uncouth, provincial Galilæans, uneducated, unmannerly, ignorant of the common decencies of life. Nay more, this Jesus made so little of what they deemed the very pillars of existence, wealth, power, influence, progress, that He would ask rich men to give their all away, powerful men to be the servants of their subjects, men of influence to become as little children, progressive men to seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, as if by means like these the world would be the better served. He was not practical; He talked of truth, and faith, and love, and sacrifice, and death itself, not of the things that really mattered. He even acknowledged that the children of this world were wiser than the children of light. No, taking all together, there was still room for doubt, still reason to hesitate; and prudence warned them, in a matter so important, to make quite sure before they committed themselves to such a momentous decision.

Hence it became easy for these men to shield themselves behind safe bulwarks. After all a matter of this kind was not an individual's affair. It was a question for the authorities to settle. If the Pharisees and Scribes and priests would only concur, and accept Jesus, well and good; they would then gladly follow. But so long as they refused Him, surely with their knowledge, and their experience, and their prudence, they ought to know, better than an untrained layman. No; they would leave the thing alone; to enquire further, to study more, to follow their own reasoning, to listen to the fascinating language of this Man, was only to make themselves more restless, more unsettled, more suspicious that they were in the wrong. It was no concern of theirs; they had other things to attend to, their estates to manage, their business to control, their families to consider; for the present it was wise to leave Jesus of Nazareth alone.

S. John looking back saw all this. He saw on the one hand the group of determined enemies, not too large but that it might have been overcome, yet when left alone large enough to dominate all the rest. On the other hand he saw the multitude, by no means inconsiderable, that followed Jesus after its own fashion but sorely needed the hand of its spiritual leaders to guide it. And between He saw the still larger number, of men of all conditions, especially in higher places, who could have been leaders if they would, but who held aloof, with reasons the most specious, affecting unconviction, indifference, what they called an open mind; and he understood how true were the words once uttered by His Master:

‘He that is not with me
Is against me
And he that gathereth not with me
Scattereth.’

Regretfully he mentioned them:

‘However
Many of the chief men also believed in him
But because of the Pharisees
They did not confess him
That they might not be cast out of the synagogue
For they loved the glory of men
More than the glory of God.’

For such men as these S. John must say a parting word. He will not argue with them; that is useless. They are more clever than he, and too often argument leads to no conviction; dialectic too often is a matter not of truth but of skill; too often truth itself is disfigured by clever syllogisms. He did not pretend to such subtlety; he would restate the plain truth as Jesus Himself had plainly stated it. If they willed to take it as it was, they would, and then no further argument would be needed; if they willed not, they would not, and then no argument would effect anything. He looked back; he brought together a few of his Master's leading sentences. They should serve as a summary of His teaching, and with them he would conclude.

‘But Jesus cried and said
He that believeth in me
Doth not believe in me
But in him that sent me
And he that seeth me
Seeth him that sent me
I am come a light into the world
That whosoever believeth in me
May not remain in darkness

And if any man hear my words
And keep them not
I do not judge him
For I came not to judge the world
But to save the world
He that despiseth me
And receiveth not my words
Hath one that judgeth him
The word that I have spoken
The same shall judge him in the last day
For I have not spoken of myself
But the Father who sent me
He gave me commandment
What I should say and what I should speak
And I know
That his commandment is life everlasting
The things therefore that I speak
Even as the Father said unto me
So do I speak.'

It is the method of S. John throughout, from the beginning to the end, and it is the method of his Master. He appeals beyond argument, to certainty more sure than all reason, as S. Thomas puts it, which is faith. He knows that no one can come in contact with Jesus, look at Him honestly, and not be convinced, beyond possibility of doubt, of His overwhelming truth. This almost terrible sincerity of the Son of Thunder, in his Gospel and in his Epistles, is an argument in favour of the authenticity of his writings which the critics overlook. No imitator, no substitute, no mere disciple who had not known and loved Jesus in the flesh, could have written so daringly, and yet so convincingly, as this. Among all the writers in the Church perhaps none comes nearer to this than S. Bernard. He, too, fired with the flames of faith and love, knows beyond a doubt, yet his faith is not fanaticism ; thunders out against those who play with the name of Jesus, yet his thundering is not intolerance ; pleads with the simplicity of a child that the Master may be given His due, yet his pleading is not weakness. S. Bernard is great and at times inspires awe ; but even S. Bernard falls short of the terrific, unflinching, all-devouring, indignant and yet affectionate emphasis of S. John.

Thus, in these chosen sentences of the teaching of his Master, he speaks with a logic of his own, founded on faith, convincing. You believe in God, he says, then you must believe in Jesus. You wish to know God; you may know Him through Jesus. For Jesus is the light sent to reveal Him; Jesus is the messenger sent to teach Him; Jesus is the life of God Himself sent to give us life everlasting. Reject Him and you reject all else; God, knowledge, truth, eternal life. You will be convicted of this rejection, not by any outside judge, but by the evidence of the very words which you have rejected. Receive Him and you receive all else; the knowledge of God even now, life everlasting hereafter; and your justification shall be the words themselves in which you have put faith, even the words of God Himself.

112. Last Words outside the City

The work was now ended and Jesus turned to go away. He had concluded with threatening words:

> 'Behold your house shall be left to you desolate';

now as He went, with all the signs of grief, there was also something of definite renunciation in His whole manner. What He had said had set the disciples pondering. 'The house shall be left desolate'? Surely He did not imply that a curse would fall on this wonder of the world, this house of God in Jerusalem? There was nothing like it in creation. Rome itself with all its wealth, Greece with all its art, could boast of nothing so magnificent; its golden roof with its numberless spires, its marbles of every hue, its colonnades and arches, the costly offerings encrusting its walls, and all on a scale that surpassed all imagination. Even Solomon's temple had not been so glorious; the temple of Esdras was a toy beside it. Though Herod had begun this work, Herod the shame of their race, still so wonderful was it, so complete, so transcending, that one might have argued that it had at last been built to prepare for the coming of the King that was to be. If Herod had built it, Herod had perished; might it not be supposed that the Providence of God had so arranged that the alien should serve His ends, even as the Hebrews of old carried with them the riches of Egypt when they set forth into the desert?

No, it looked impossible; such wanton destruction could never be intended. And yet they did not know. He had never seemed to give much attention to the beauty and riches of the place ; in the Temple He had always been too preoccupied. They would call His attention to it. They would point out its beauty, its wealth. If doom were indeed overhanging it, who knew but that a word from them, spoken in due season, might avert it ?

'And as he was going out of the temple
His disciples came
To shew him the buildings of the temple
Adorned with goodly stones and gifts
And one of them said to him
Master, behold
What manner of stones and what buildings are here.'

Jesus looked where they pointed and looked at them. Did He appreciate the beauty of the place ? We have no reason to doubt it ; nevertheless we may call attention to the fact that whereas in several places He shows how He loves the beauty of nature, nowhere does He speak of a work of art. The handiwork of God He extols, of man's handiwork He says nothing. He let them speak. He knew what they meant but He was unmoved. In a kind of disregard His hand swept along the beautiful expanse before Him.

'Do you see all these things ?' he said,
'Amen I say to you
The days will come
When there shall not be left a stone upon a stone
That shall not be thrown down.'

They were definite words, and not to be mistaken. If they had never understood what He meant when He had spoken of His own coming death, at least they could understand this ; the day would actually come when their beloved Temple would perish. Did the thoughts of none of them go back to that memorable sermon on the mountain-side ? And did it not occur to them that this emphatic sentence was but a fulfilment of the warning with which that sermon ended ? And did they not thereby link up the fall of this Temple with that building which He had promised of another upon a rock against which the gates of hell itself should never prevail ?

'Everyone therefore that heareth these my words
And doth them
Shall be likened to a wise man
That built his house upon a rock
And the rain fell
And the floods came
And the winds blew
And they beat upon that house
And it fell not
For it was founded on a rock
And everyone that heareth these my words
And doth them not
Shall be like a foolish man
That built his house upon the sand
And the rain fell
And the floods came
And the winds blew
And they beat upon that house
And it fell
And great was the fall thereof.'

'Thou art Peter
And upon this rock
I will build my church
And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'

Let one word be added. As the traveller to-day stands on the steps that once led up to the Holy Temple, and sees above him on the flat elevation the mosque of Omar, deliberately, solidly built upon the spot where the Holy of Holies had once stood, and all around not a trace of a building that can recall a thought of the ancient Jewish rites; when one sees how carefully the whole Temple area is guarded so that never may a Jew step within its walls—a pagan, a Christian, yes, but a Jew, never,—one is struck silent at the visible fulfilment of this condemning prophecy. It has been mentioned before of the whole city; when we stand within the Temple court, and look around, the ruin comes home to us with a strangely new significance.

The group passed through the gate and made its way down the slope towards the brook, Kedron. What He had said had stirred deep thoughts; these last words had made the Twelve very silent. It was in the afternoon; the sun shone now westward behind them, the shadow of the Temple fell upon them as they came down the slope. There were others going out with them, making their way to their respective encampments, intent upon the business of the festival and therefore the more readily leaving Jesus and His Twelve alone. They crossed the brook by the little stone bridge, and ascended Olivet by the narrow lane that led straight up before them. As they began to ascend, the rays of the afternoon sun fell upon them. In a quarter of an hour they reached a resting-place, where they could look back and see the Temple spread out beneath them, gleaming in white and gold, flashing back the sunlight, shining like a very sea of fire. Indeed it was the very spot at which, on the Sunday preceding, He had stopped that triumphant procession, and had looked upon the city, and wept over it, and foretold its doom. Therefore as they sat and rested, it was inevitable that they should link these two prophecies together; and, as they pondered over them, they longed that He would tell them more.

For the moment Jesus had gone apart from the rest; and as often before, when they had seen His desire to be alone, they had left Him to Himself and His own thoughts. What they were we can guess from what has gone before and from what is to come after. It was the beginning of the end, but it was also the end of the beginning, and both alike were a great agony. Of the first He had said enough; of the past there would not be left a stone upon a stone; upon the ruins the future would be built. But not without suffering, suffering untold; and that not for Himself alone but for all those who were to help Him in the Kingdom. The Prince of this world had been cast out; none the less would there be a great upheaval, such as might stagger the faith even of those who would cling closest to Him. He must forewarn them; He must tell them beforehand all He could. They would not understand, only as time went on would the truth of His words reveal itself. And they would be steadied and hold on, and because He had foretold it to them would see in the seeming defeats only proofs of victory.

He was soon given an opportunity to speak. As He sat there alone looking down upon Jerusalem, Peter and Andrew, James and John stood apart and watched Him. What a different Jesus did this seem from the Jesus they had first encountered down there by the Jordan valley.

What a different Jesus from Him who had specially called these four by the lake-side at Bethsaida! How different from Him whom the three had seen transfigured before them on the mountain! Since that day how very strangely things had turned out! Then it had seemed to them that they were on the very verge of victory; since then, except for these last days, everything had seemed to go against them. Before it had all been promise and assurance; now it was chiefly disappointment and warning. And to make matters worse, whereas before He had consistently avoided needless danger, now He threw Himself into its very midst. True, He held His own; even in the Temple He had proved He was the Master. Nevertheless no one could hide from himself the gathering clouds, and He Himself had shown He was aware of them. What could it all mean? That in the end all would come right they knew, but in the meantime what were they to make of this doom of the city and the Temple, of the time when He would go and would come again, of the final consummation, whatever that was to be? They would ask Him; often before they had asked Him the meaning of parables, the meaning of His teaching of forgiveness, the meaning of their own limitations, the meaning of prayer. This was akin to all these, and they would ask Him to tell them more. They nodded to each other; they came nearer to Him; as the sun was lowering over Jerusalem beyond them,

'As he sat on the mount of Olivet
Over against Jerusalem
Peter and James and John and Andrew
Asked him apart
Tell us when these things shall be
And what shall be the sign
When all these things shall begin to be fulfilled
And what shall be the sign of thy coming
And of the consummation of the world?'

It is evident that what follows made a deep impression on those who heard it. Matthew and Mark and Luke, each is at great pains to record it; for once all three are in precise agreement as to time, and place, and circumstance, and subject-matter. They all cover the same ground; they preserve the same general order. Here and there we have a difference of a sentence, each has words and expressions of his own, but one gets the impression, as one reads and compares the three versions, that they know they are dealing with mysteries, with things prophetic and therefore not likely to be at once understood ; hence all the more reason to be accurate.

The content of this last discourse has been much discussed and analysed, and variously interpreted, by scholars of every school. For us the problem is more easy. We are dealing with much that even to-day is full of mystery ; we may leave it until such time as the Holy Spirit shall lift the veil. Instead we wish, if we can, to catch in the words a further understanding of Him who spoke them. Therefore, as in the Sermon on the Mount, let us follow the lead of S. Matthew ; and as both in that sermon and here he would seem to have brought together into one what Jesus has said in other places, so may we. But with this difference, that whereas in the Sermon on the Mount we blended all into one whole discourse, here it would seem wiser to give each passage apart ; so much would seem to depend on the turns and phrases of the writers. But this will be no disadvantage. By bringing them together we get at most a triple repetition, which will help us the more to realize both what appealed most to the Twelve, and what was most striking in the language and manner of the Master on that eventful day.

And Jesus answering said to them :

(Matthew xxiv, 4–8.) 'Take heed that no man seduce you. For many will come in my name saying, I am Christ. And they will seduce many. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that ye be not troubled. For these things must come to pass : but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom ; and there shall be pestilences and famines and earthquakes in places. Now all these are the beginnings of sorrows.

(Mark xiii, 5–8.) 'Take heed lest any man deceive you. For many shall come in my name saying, I am he : and they shall deceive many. And when you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, fear ye not. For such things must needs be : but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom : and there shall be earthquakes in divers places and famines. These things are the beginning of sorrows.

(Luke xxi, 8–11.) ‘Take heed you be not seduced: for many will come in my name, saying: I am he and the time is at hand. Go ye not therefore after them. And when you shall hear of wars and seditions, be not terrified. These things must first come to pass: but the end is not yet presently. Then he said to them: Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there shall be great earthquakes in divers places and pestilences and famines and terrors from heaven: and there shall be great signs.

2. (Matthew xxiv, 9–14.) ‘Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall put you to death: and you shall be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be scandalized and shall betray one another and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise and shall seduce many. And because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold. And he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations: and then shall the consummation come.

(Mark x, 9–13.) ‘But look to yourselves. For they shall deliver you up to councils: and in the synagogues you shall be beaten: and you shall stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony unto them. And unto all nations the gospel must first be preached. And when they shall lead you and deliver you up, be not thoughtful beforehand what you shall speak; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye. For it is not you that speak, but the Holy Ghost. And brother shall betray his brother unto death, and the father his son; and children shall rise up against their parents and shall work their death. And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake. But he that shall endure unto the end, he shall be saved.

(Luke xxi, 12–19.) ‘But before all these things they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prisons, dragging you before kings and governors, for my name's sake. And it shall happen unto you for a testimony. Lay it up therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before how you shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay. And you shall be betrayed by your parents and brethren and kinsmen and friends: and some of you they will put to death. And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake. But a hair of your head shall not perish. In your patience you shall possess your souls.

3. (Matthew xxiv, 15–21.) 'When therefore you shall see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place: he that readeth let him understand. Then they that are in Judæa let them flee to the mountains: and he that is on the housetop let him not come down to take anything out of his house: and he that is in the field let him not go back to take his coat. And woe to them that are with child and that give suck in those days. But pray that your flight may be not in the winter or on the sabbath. For there shall be then great tribulation such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be.

(Mark xiii, 14–19.) 'And when you shall see the abomination of desolation, standing where it ought not (he that heareth let him understand): then let them that are in Judæa flee into the mountains. And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house nor enter therein to take anything out of the house. And let him that shall be in the field not turn back to take up his garment. And woe to them that are with child and that give suck in those days. But pray ye that these things happen not in winter. For in those days shall be such tribulations as were not from the beginning of the creation which God created until now: neither shall be.

(Luke xxi, 20–24.) 'And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with an army, then know that the desolation thereof is at hand. Then let those who are in Judæa flee to the mountains; and those who are in the midst thereof depart out: and those who are in the countries not enter into it. For these are the days of vengeance that all things may be fulfilled that are written. But woe to them that are with child and give suck in those days: for there shall be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword and shall be led away captives into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles till the times of the nations be fulfilled.

4. (Matthew xxiv, 22–25.) 'And unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved, but for the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say to you, Lo here is Christ, or there : do not believe him. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall shew great signs and wonders insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect. Behold I have told it to you beforehand.

(Mark xiii, 20–23.) 'And unless the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh should be saved : but, for the sake of the elect which he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days. And then if any man shall say to you : Lo, here is Christ—Lo, he is there : do not believe. For there will rise up false Christs and false prophets : and shall shew signs to seduce (if it were possible) even the elect. Take you heed therefore : behold, I have foretold you all things.

5. (Matthew xxiv, 26–28.) 'If therefore they shall say to you : Behold he is in the desert : go ye not out. Behold, he is in the closets : believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth even unto the west : so shall the coming of the Son of man be. Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together.

6. (Matthew xxiv, 29–35.) 'And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of heaven shall be moved. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. And then shall all tribes of the earth mourn : and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty. And he shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice : and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the furthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them. And from the fig-tree learn a parable : When the branch thereof is now tender and the leaves come forth, you know that summer is nigh. So you also, when you shall see all these things, know ye that it is nigh, even at the doors. Amen I say to you that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass : but my words shall not pass.

(Mark xiii, 24–31.) 'But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light. And the stars of heaven shall be falling down and the powers that are in heaven shall be moved. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. Now of the fig-tree learn ye a parable. When the branch thereof is now tender and the leaves are come forth, you know that summer is very near. So you also when you shall see these things come to pass, know ye that it is very nigh, even at the doors. Amen, I say to you that this generation shall not pass until all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my word shall not pass away.

(Luke xxi, 25–33.) 'And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars: and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves: men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the world. For the powers of heaven shall be moved. And then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand. And he spoke to them a similitude. See the fig-tree and all the trees: when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh. So you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand. Amen, I say to you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away.

7. (Matthew xxiv, 36–42.) 'But of that day and hour no one knoweth, no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone. And as in the days of Noe, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For, as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noe entered into the ark: and they knew not till the flood came and took them all away: so also shall the coming of the Son of man be. Then two shall be left in the field. One shall be taken and one shall be left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill. One shall be taken and one shall be left. Watch ye,

therefore, because ye know not what hour your Lord will come.

(Mark xiii, 32–37.) ‘But of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray. For ye know not when the time is. Even as a man who, going into a far country, left his house and gave authority to his servants over every work and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore (for you know not when the lord of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning): lest coming on a sudden he find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch.

(Luke xxi, 34–36.) ‘And take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life: and that day come upon you suddenly. For as a snare shall it come upon all that sit upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come and to stand before the Son of man.

8. (Matthew xxiv, 43–51.) ‘But this know ye, that if the goodman of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would certainly watch and would not suffer his house to be broken open. Wherefore be you also ready, because at what hour you know not the Son of man will come. Who, thinkest thou, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath appointed over his family, to give them meat in season? Blessed is that servant, whom when his lord shall come he shall find so doing. Amen I say to you: he shall place him over all his goods. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart: My Lord is long a coming: and shall begin to strike his fellow-servants and shall eat and drink with drunkards: the lord of that servant shall come in a day that he hopeth not and at an hour that he knoweth not; and shall separate him, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

9. (Matthew xxv, 1–13.) ‘Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like to ten virgins, who taking their lamps went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. And five of them were foolish and five wise. But the five foolish,

having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with the lamps. And the bridegroom tarrying they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made. Behold the bridegroom cometh, Go ye forth to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise: Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. The wise answered, saying: Less perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves. Now whilst they went to buy the bridegroom came: and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage. And the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering said: Amen I say to you, I know you not. Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour.

10. (Matthew xxv, 14–30.) 'For even as a man going into a far country called his servants and delivered to them his goods: and to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to everyone according to his proper ability: and immediately he took his journey. And he that had received five talents went his way, and traded with the same and gained other five. And in like manner he that had received two gained other two. But he that had received the one, going his way, digged into the earth and hid his lord's money. But after a long time the lord of those servants came and reckoned with them. And he that had received the five talents coming brought other five talents, saying: Lord, thou didst deliver to me five talents. Behold I have gained other five over and above. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the two talents came and said: Lord, thou deliveredst two talents to me. Behold I have gained other two. His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things. Enter into the joy of thy lord. But he that had received the one talent came and said: Lord, I know that thou art a hard man: thou reapest where thou hast not sown and gatherest where thou hast not strewed, and being

afraid, I went and hid thy talent in the earth. Behold here thou hast that which is thine. And his lord answering, said to him: Wicked and slothful servant, thou knowest that I reap where I sow not, and gather where I have not strewed. Thou oughtest therefore to have committed my money to the bankers: and at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take ye away therefore the talent from him and give it him that hath ten talents. For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound, but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away. And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

11. (Matthew xxv, 31–46.) 'And when the Son of man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before him: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the king say to them that shall be on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in: naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came to me. Then shall the just answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry and fed thee: thirsty and gave thee to drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and took thee in? Or naked and covered thee? Or when did we see thee sick or in prison and came to thee? And the king answering shall say to them: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me. Then he shall say to them also that shall be on his left hand: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me not to eat: I was thirsty and you gave me not to drink. I was a stranger and you took me not in: naked and you covered me not: sick and in prison and you did not visit me. Then they also shall answer him: Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger

or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to thee? Then he shall answer them, saying: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to me. And these shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just, into life everlasting.'

In many ways it is evident that this last discourse impressed the followers of Jesus very deeply; more deeply, it may be, because so full of mystery, than anything He had ever said before. That they understood what He said is, perhaps, more than doubtful. But this they knew; that while He had not answered their question as to the time, He had looked into the future and given them signs, and the lesson of it all had been confidence in trouble, and fidelity in life, and constant watchfulness. Carefully they treasured the words; afterwards, when their own work had begun, we seem to see how they pondered them. Perhaps nowhere in all the Gospels do the three Evangelists run so long together parallel.

But it was over at last, and the party rose to go. As He rose, it seemed that a great weight had been lifted off His shoulders and He was braced to action. They climbed over the hill, dropped down by Bethphage to Bethania on the other side. In the deepening twilight the camp fires began to flicker all around them. For some time He was silent; it was His last day of labour; one wonders that under the emotion of it He could speak at all. On the other hand He could not but realize the next time He would come along that road. It would be in two days from thence, when He would return to the city to eat the Paschal Supper and to die. How could He then but speak of it? He had spoken before, and they had not understood; they would not understand even now; still for the last time they should hear it, in three days more they would know only too well.

'And it came to pass
When Jesus had ended all these words
He said to his disciples
You know
That after two days will be the pasch
And the Son of man shall be delivered up
To be crucified.'

Did they not know it? All this week they had watched the preparations being made, the pilgrims gathering in from all sides, the bartering for the victims, the arranging for the unleavened bread. As for the last part of his sentence, they had heard Him say the same before, and now as then it had no meaning for them. On the contrary, did not the events of these last three days justify them in the hope that soon, perhaps during this very paschal week, the Kingdom at last was about to be founded? He had opened that week as a King; each day He had confuted His opponents; this time, unlike former occasions when He had appeared in the Temple, not a finger had been lifted against Him. There was no longer among the people that contention and friction which on other occasions had made them anxious. The multitudes were with Him, foreign pilgrims were inclined to support Him; never more than now had He so great an opportunity of making Himself known to all the world.

But the thoughts of Jesus were elsewhere. That evening He passed over to Bethania; for two whole days we do not hear of Him again. And we know why. If before that day when He chose the Twelve

> 'He spent the night in the prayer of God';

if we find Him for hours on the mountain-side the night before He gave to men the doctrine of the Bread of Life; if on the morning when He asked them:

> 'Who do men say that I am?'

they found that on that day, too, He had spent long hours in prayer, then we need have no doubt how He spent the greater part of these last eight-and-forty hours. It might have been in the house of Lazarus; more probably alone on the mountain-side that runs down from Olivet, towards the spot where two years or more before He had served His forty days of preparation. That was the beginning, this was the end. Then He had been tempted in bread, in being lifted up, in the offer of a kingdom, now in bread indeed He would prove Himself the Son of God, now lifted up He would draw all things to Himself, now from His appointed throne He would reign. The day had come; He would welcome it; nevertheless must He brace up His whole human nature to go through with it.

There with His Father must we leave Him.

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

		Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1	The Coming of John the Baptist	iii, 1–10	i, 1–6	iii, 1–14	
2	The Prophecy of the Messias	iii, 11–12	i, 7–8	iii, 15–18	
3	The Baptism of Jesus	iii, 13–17	i, 9–11	iii, 21–22	
4	The Temptations in the Desert	iv, 1–11	i, 12–13	iv, 1–13	
5	The Witness of John the Baptist				i, 19–34
6	The First Disciples				i, 35–43
7	The Feast at Cana				ii, 1–12
8	The First Cleansing of the Temple				ii, 13–25
9	Nicodemus				iii, 1–21
10	Further Witness of John the Baptist				iii, 22–36
11	Jesus goes to Galilee	(xiv, 3–5)	(vi, 17–20)		
12	John the Baptist in Prison	iv, 12, 17	i, 14, 15	iv, 14–15	iv, 1–3
13	The Woman of Samaria				iv, 4–42
14	The Second Miracle at Cana				iv, 43–54
15	The Beggar at the Probatic Pool				v, 1–47
16	The First Rejection at Nazareth			iv, 16–30	
17	Settlement at Capharnaum	iv, 13–16		iv, 31	
18	The Call of the Four	iv, 18–22	i, 16–20		
19	The Demoniac in the Temple		i, 21–28	iv, 31–37	
20	Simon's Mother-in-law	viii, 14–15	i, 29–31	iv, 38–39	
21	A First Evening of Miracles	viii, 16–17	i, 32–34	iv, 40–41	
22	The Beginning of His Tours	iv, 23	i, 35–39	iv, 42–44	
23	The Miracle in Simon's Boat			v, 1–11	
24	The Leper	viii, 1–4	i, 40–45	v, 12–16	
25	The First Forgiving of Sins	ix, 1–8	ii, 1–12	v, 17–26	
26	The Call of Levi	ix, 9–13	ii, 13–17	v, 27–32	
27	The Banquet at Levi's House				
28	The Disciples of John the Baptist	ix, 14–17	ii, 18–22	v, 33–39	
29	The Disciples and the Ears of Corn	xii, 1–8	ii, 23–28	vi, 1–5	
30	The Man with the Withered Hand	xii, 9–14	iii, 1–6	vi, 6–11	
31	Retirement from Capharnaum	xii, 15–21			
32	The Choice of the Twelve	x, 2–4, iv, 24–25	iii, 7–19	vi, 12–19	
33	The Sermon on the Mount	v, 1–vii, 29	(with paral	lel passages)	
34	The Centurion's Servant	viii, 1, 5–13		vii, 1–10	
35	The Widow's Son			vii, 11–17	
36	The Embassy from John the Baptist	xi, 2–19		vii, 18–35	
37	The Woman who was a Sinner			vii, 36–50	
38	A Tour of Galilee			viii, 1–3	
39	The Charge of Beelzebub	xii, 22–37	iii, 19–30	xi, 17–23 vi, 43–45	
40	The Coming of His Mother and Brethren	xii, 46–50	iii, 31–35	viii, 19–21	
41	The Beginning of Parables	xiii, 1–23	iv, 1–25	viii, 4–18	
42	Further Parables	xiii, 24–53	iv, 26–34	xiii, 18–21	

		MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
43	The Storm at Sea	viii, 18, 23–27	iv, 35–41	viii, 22–25	
45	The Woman with the Issue of Blood	ix, 18–26	v, 21–43	viii, 40–56	
46	The Daughter of Jairus				
44	The Demoniac at Gerasa	viii, 28–34	v, 1–20	viii, 26–39	
47	The Second Rejection at Nazareth	xiii, 54–58	vi, 1–5		
48	Another Tour of Galilee	ix, 35–38	vi, 6		
49	The Mission of the Twelve	vi, 7–13, x, 5–xi, 1	vi, 7–13	ix, 1–6	
50	The Death of John the Baptist	xiv, 6–12	vi, 21–29		
51	Herod and Jesus	xiv, 1–2	vi, 14–16	ix, 7–9	
52	The Feeding of the Five Thousand	xiv, 13–21	vi, 30–44	ix, 10–17	vi, 1–14
53	The Walking on the Waters	xix, 22–33	vi, 45–52		vi, 15–21
54	A Morning of Miracles	xiv, 34–36	vi, 53–56		
55	The Bread of Life				vi, 22–71
56	The Pharisees and Unwashed Hands	xv, 1–20	vii, 1–23		
57	The Syro-Phœnician Woman	xv, 21–28	vii, 24–30		
58	The Deaf Mute and others in Decapolis	xv, 29–31	vii, 31–37		
59	The Feeding of the Four Thousand	xv, 32–38	viii, 1–9		
60	The Request for a Sign	xv, 39–xvi, 4	viii, 10–12		
61	The Leaven of the Pharisees	xvi, 4–12	viii, 13–21		
62	The Blind Man at Bethsaida		viii, 22–26		
63	The Confession of Peter	xvi, 13–20	viii, 27–39	ix, 18–20	
64	The First Prophecy of the Passion	xvi, 21–28	viii, 30–ix, 1	ix, 21–27	
65	The Transfiguration	xvii, 1–13	ix, 2–13	ix, 28–36	
66	The Demoniac	xvii, 14–21	ix, 14–29	ix, 37–43	
67	Another Prophecy of the Passion	xvii, 22–23	ix, 30–32	ix, 43–45	
68	The Temple Tax	xvii, 24–27	ix, 33		
69	Lessons to the Twelve	xviii, 1–35	ix, 33–50	ix, 46–50 &c.	
70	The Feast of Tabernacles			ix, 51–56	vii, 1–10
71	The New Disciples	viii, 19–22		ix, 57–62	
72	At the Feast of Tabernacles				vii, 11–36
73	The Last Day of the Feast				vii, 37–53
74	The Woman taken in Adultery				vii, 53–viii, 11
75	The End of the Feast				viii, 12–59
76	The Man born blind				ix, 1–41
77	The Good Shepherd				x, 1–21
78	The Mission of the Seventy-two	xi, 20–24		x, 1–16	
79	The Return of the Seventy-two	xi, 25–30		x, 17–24	
80	The Parable of the Good Samaritan			x, 25–37	
81	At the House of Martha			x, 38–42	
82	In the House of the Judæan Pharisee			xi, 37–54	
83	With the Multitude in Judæa			xii, 1–59	
84	The Galilæans slain in the Temple			xiii, 1–9	
85	The Infirm Woman on the Sabbath			viii, 10–17	
86	The Feast of Dedication				x, 22–39
87	The Number of the Elect			xiii, 22–30	
88	The Threat of Herod			xiii, 31–35	
89	The Man with Dropsy			xiv, 1–24	
90	Discourses on the Road			xiv, 25–xvii, 10	

		MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
91	A Résumé				
92	The Raising of Lazarus				xi, 1–46
93	The Hiding in Ephraim				xi, 47–54
94	The Last Tour	xix, 1–2	x, 1	xvii, 11	
95	The Ten Lepers			xvii, 12–19	
96	The Coming of the Kingdom	xxiv, 23–41	xiii, 21–23	xvii, 20–37	
97	Two Parables on Prayer			xviii, 1–14	
98	Jesus and the Children	xix, 3–5	x, 13–16	xviii, 15–17	
99	The Rich Young Man	xix, 16-xx, 16	x, 17–31	xviii, 18–30	
100	Third Prophecy of the Passion	xx, 17–19	x, 32–34	xviii, 31–34	
101	The Ambition of the Sons of Zebedee	xx, 20–28	x, 35–45		
102	The Blind Men at Jericho	xx, 29–34	x, 46–52	xviii, 35–43	
103	Zacchæus			xix, 1–10	
104	The Parable of the Talents	xxv, 14–30		xix, 11–28	
105	The Supper in Bethania	xxvi, 6–13	xiv, 3–9		xii, 1–11
106	The Procession of Palms	xxi, 1–11	xi, 1–11	xix, 29–44	xii, 12–19
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